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FORTRESS NORTH

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*Dorothy Wordsworth in a
Letter to Coleridge said:*

•

*“***Yes, do send me a book for my birthday. Not a bargain book, bought from a haberdasher, but a beautiful book, a book to caress—peculiar, distinctive, individual; a book that hath first caught your eye and then pleased your fancy, written by an author with a tender whim, all right out of his heart. We will read it together in the gloaming, and when the gathering dusk doth blur the page, we’ll sit with our hearts too full for speech and think it over.”*



Father Lacombe arrives from Lac St. Annes

FORTRESS NORTH

by

ELLA JACOBY WALKER



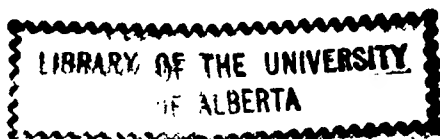
*Illustrated throughout
by the Author*



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To all those—and there are many—who have so generously contributed help and material forming the basis of this novel, the author offers grateful acknowledgment. There has been joy in this work with them and, with them, the author voices the hope that this portrayal of the “storied past” will activate interest and aid in the preservation of Canadiana in the years to come. Without our past we cannot have a future—“the past must live or the future dies.”

FOREWORD

*"Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied past."*

If a "storied past" is of the very essence of the love of one's native soil the citizens of northern Alberta and of Edmonton in particular should be patriots of the first quality. Here and there throughout this broad land occurred some event of high courage and endurance calculated to stir the blood. To all interested in the settlement of this "last best West" and the founding of a great city this story will bring both romance and inspiration. Woven into it are the stories of men, white, half white and Indian, of a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years.

When I visited the borough of Edmonton in Middlesex recently I found the keenest interest on the part of municipal officers and the citizens generally in the Canadian namesake of their own city. Especially did they want to know how our city got its name. I can imagine the interest with which this book—particularly the early chapters—will be read in the birthplace of Sir James Wynter Lake.

This story will be of great interest, too, to the rapidly dwindling number of "old-timers" who either themselves shared in the incidents described or knew intimately those who were the principal actors in the later scenes of the drama. There will be hot arguments, too, as to fancied inaccuracies as they fail to realize that they are reading a novel and not a history. The author has rendered her community a great service in presenting all this material in such attractive and readable form.

In the first issue of the *Edmonton Bulletin* dated December 6th, 1880, and described in Chapter 9, appeared this advertisement:

"EDMONTON HOTEL AND FEED STABLES
Established 1867

The pioneer house of accommodation this side of
Portage la Prairie. A good game of

BILLIARDS OR POOL

can be played, and a very social evening can be
spent in the Billiard Room.

DONALD ROSS, Proprietor."

This is the same Donald Ross, who with Matthew McCauley and W. S. Robertson made up the first School Board of Edmonton.

Many are the legends which have grown up around the great chief of the Crees, Maskepetoon, or "Broken Arm," who because of the circumstances surrounding his murder by the Blackfeet has been called "Alberta's First Martyr to Peace." While the tale recorded here is fictional, it is quite in keeping with the general character of this understanding native. The mere mention of Maskepetoon brings to mind the part played by the early missionaries—Rundle, Evans and the McDougalls of the Wesleyan Church, Fathers Thibault and Lacombe, Roman Catholic, and Newton and McLean, Anglican. The erection of the original McDougall Church is described in Chapter 4. Recently this building has been restored on the same site, just as it was in 1871, and is now being used as a chapel and museum. Pictures of pioneer missionaries of all faiths adorn its walls. This, with the museum at St. Albert, preserve for posterity something of the dauntless courage and heroic faith of these pioneers of the Cross.

The stories of the coming of the Northwest Mounted Police, of the uprising of the Indians, the stringing of the first tele-

graph line, the teacher's trip down Strathcona hill in Alex LeGrand's Bus, the rescue of the Hudsons, the return of Tom Grant and the breaking of ground for the new University buildings are all filled with drama and are well told. Most of all, the intimate characterization of those who played notable parts in the early days of this city, from the building of McDougall Church to the outbreak of the Great War, appealed to me. These were actual people—men and women whom we all knew and saw going about their tasks from day to day. The members of the first School Board have been mentioned. To these must be added the factors of the Hudson's Bay Company; men like Frank Oliver, John Walter, Alex. Taylor, John A. McDougall, A. C. Rutherford and scores of others whose activities do not come within the scope of this story. It will, I believe, prove an inspiration to the youth of today who may read it, and a course of pride in our ancestry to us all.

"All these were honoured in their generations and were the glory of their times: There be of them that have left a name behind them that their praises might be reported."

G. FRED McNALLY,
Sometime Deputy Minister of Education
for Alberta.

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Chapter One

The New Post is Built and Named

“LIFT! You dogs! Heave, you sons-a-guns! Turn it a bit—now, over! over!”

The men grunted, “Ungh-un-UNGH!” and strained against the heavy log fecklessly, awkwardly. It swung, tilted slightly, swivelled on its fulcrum, where rope held it to the centre of an upright wall beneath. They were working on the west side

of the cabin being built—a sturdy frontier structure of logs for housing wintering furmen. Already it was six logs high. But a seventh—notched and readied, was as yet not placed in position. With that done, two others would be put above the seventh. The men knew the succeeding logs would be even harder to place. All day they had toiled with building-logs; peeling, notching, sawing and lifting them to place. They hated working steadily.

The bebreached, belegginged foreman barked again: "What's the matter?" He pronounced it 'mat-tah'—the English way. His voice was harsh, angry; plainly he was roused to a degree.

Now he wheeled about, faced them, eyed balefully those sullen looking mutinous breeds before him. It was plain—they were a good-for-nothing lot! Pretending that the lift was too much for them, that they were spent—the lazy hounds!

He knew why! Since they'd heard the musket shots of the Nor'-Westers from Fort Augustus hard by, they wanted nothing but to go on the hunt, too. Hunt—fish—and drink! All they were good for! Actually they were plenty strong for this work—lithe and young, too! He'd picked them himself, with the help of Prudham, his partner. In vexatious thought the white man's sharp-featured face hardened. He swore savagely. Here it was the middle of October. They must get the building done. God in heaven, how to cope with them? And where was Prudham—what was he doing now?

"Prudham! Prudham!" he bawled in a near frenzy of exasperation. There was no response. He had scarcely expected one, but in that crying aloud he found some relief.

Prudham was, doubtless, out of earshot, perhaps fetching another keg from the boat cache below—giving in to the bastards!

Tomison,¹ the Englishman, ran an impatient hand across his forehead—and again spat orders: "Here you, Picher, notch that log end! You, Sachel—begin the sawing! And Jean, you take that axe and—"

Good God! If they didn't work while sober, how would they drunk?

Seven days since they'd reached the site, pemmican getting low, still no roof over their heads and weather likely to break any day. His irritation grew.

A crash as of breaking branches came from the thicket beyond their little clearing. The bushes parted; a man stepped out.

They gaped. A stranger looking person they'd never seen.

The slanting autumn sun illumined like fiery gold the thick growth of russet hair on the huge bearded head, bare chest and limbs of the stocky figure standing there. Plainly it was the figure of a young man. He wore a single brief and tattered leather garment, coming to the knee, that was laced and tied at the waist like an ironmonger's apron. As he slowly eased a musket from his shoulder they saw that one arm was shorter than the other, shrivelled and bent.

The Metis continued to stare; while their chief, the new Hudson's Bay trader, narrowed his eyes warily at the intruder.

"You've come from the trading post yonder?" he asked sharply.

But before he had finished, the other, too, had begun: "I heard a cr-r-ry as though fur-r help," the stranger said, in the soft burring accents of the Scots. There was something deadly in the softness of that voice. But his English rival persisted.

"You're Hughes or MacDonald from Fort Augustus?"²

"Aye, MacDonald o' Garth,"³ was the blunt answer.

His keen blue eyes, too, belied the softness of that voice; they roved shrewdly about, saw the unfinished building, lit with an unholy gleam on seeing the dangling log, became somewhat roguish as they beheld Picher and Jean fumbling axes, Sache slowly wiping a saw.

Further beyond came Alphonse with Bredin, his brother, carrying a log. The red-headed Scotsman stepped towards

them. He walked with the deliberately considered pace and force of a young bull.

The brothers showed utter astonishment, hesitated, then dropped the length of log.

The man of Garth kicked it, gave it another sounding farther down and motioned for their axes. He ran his fingers over their cutting edges—shook his head, flung down each in turn with a gesture of contempt.

Being curious, the other men drew near, showed him their axe-heads. These were likewise examined. There was animated talk among them—the guttural murmurings of the Cree tongue. Tomison, remaining at a distance, cursed his inability to understand. Later on he would learn more of the Indian speech. Prudham already had.

One axe apparently met with the stranger's approval. The edge of those thin wide lips quivered. They were habitually upturned, as though in their fashioning the Master Sculptor's chisel had slipped upward in completing the stroke. In more pleasant humour the Scotsman's face became sunny, almost sweet.

Tomison saw him lift the chosen axe, strike the big log at one end, then, poised like a giant gorilla, he raised it high above his head once more and swung it down with a speed and force that was terrific.

The log cracked, split;—it needed only one more stroke to lay it open, asunder.

Admittedly, it was an impressive sight. Sache, Jean, Alphonse and the others were speechless in wonder at the feat accomplished. They clustered about this superman, muttering their appreciation; ogled that shorter arm, uncanny in its rigid strength. The man was a wonder!

Their own chief remained at a distance. He refilled his pipe, sat upon a tree stump and waited to see what would happen.

Then began a furious sharpening of axe heads, the rolling of logs in place for splicing—actually a game of log splitting had been started. They chopped with vim and purpose.

Every now and then they raised a shout amid the noise of splintering logs, at someone's signal success.

The Englishman rose. The thing had gone far enough! And just then he saw Jack Prudham emerging from the bush on their path to the river.

Jack was hurrying these final steps of his haul, eager to drop the weighty load from his shoulder. It was, as Tomison suspected, a keg of rum.

The quick eye of MacDonald had also espied this arrival. He swaggered up—pointing.

"If ye'll spare me yon keg o' rum, I'll build ye a roof sthrong and sound." This time the voice was thick—terse.

Tomison's face darkened with displeasure. The eyes of the two men met in a look of quiet, measured hatred.

"We require what we have for—" began the Hudson's Bay man coldly, and then to his dismay saw that his partner had dropped the keg virtually at the feet of MacDonald, and was grasping the rival trader's outstretched pointing hand.

Jack's face showed supreme and delighted surprise. "A pleasure," he was saying, "to see another white man in the wilderness."

There began an interchange of worded amenities—abrupt, staccato, on one hand at first, but gradually levelling into a smooth-running, lively conversation. They strode toward the place of log chopping activity.

The half-breeds were now out-doing themselves in an effort to gain the special notice, the word of commendation and praise, from that man of superb physical prowess. Like over-eager children they scrambled, fought for attention and supremacy in feats of strength.

The sight of all this was annoying to their foreman. Shouldering his musket he walked petulantly towards the path to the river. He remembered a wish to check on some baled goods left in their temporary cache that was down near the boats on the river bank.

On the trodden path before him he saw a small packet. "Jack must have dropped this," he thought, and picked it up.

The small, compact package was securely wrapped in sail cloth, neatly sewn together and labelled in a fine feminine handwriting. "Flower seeds—garden shrubs," he read. His face twisted in a dry, ironical smile.

He thought of taking it to Prudham at once, and then decided against retracing his steps for so trivial an article.

"Jack! Jack!" he shouted, and gaining his partner's attention, he called out: "I'm going down to the cache—try for some game." And then added more as a jest, "—and should I plant these?" He held the little packet high for him to see. His friend turned, looked and grinned a bit sheepishly in recognition of the parcel, nodded his head in a quick casual assent. The other men gave out answering shouts of either envy or derision—Tomison wasn't sure which.

The trader pocketed the little packet in his trousers, walked leisurely down towards where their boats were beached. He skirted the broad flat meadow with its foliage aflame with color, and came out to the river's edge. There at anchor lay their sturdy York boats, and farther beyond on the banks was the tarpaulin-covered cache. Tomison felt no disposition to go to it in his present state of mind. The day had been fine, with a cloudless clear sky. Upstream a little way he could see the point of that island⁴ that had been one of the markers for finding this site; the site that the Honourable Company knew to have been so profitable in fur trade for a rival⁵ company for more than a year.

It occurred to him suddenly that he would like to explore that island. Jack had already done so. He wandered about everywhere, and had told of dubbing the tributary⁶ not a mile down stream "Pymmies Brook," after the stream of this name that ran into the river Lea at his home in Edmonton, Middlesex.

Tomison knew well and remembered Pymmes Brook, realized that there was precious little resemblance in the two streams, nor was there much either between this eddying Saskatchewan at his right and that quiet river "Lea" in England; though even the Saskatchewan was low in level and less turbulent at this season, offering wide flat shoreline for him to tread upon. The twisting current midstream compelled him to follow its course. He took a few faltering steps and then strode more briskly on.

The walk by himself was proving enjoyable. The air was like wine. It was a relief to be away from prodding others to work; too often it fell upon himself to have it properly done.

Now let Prudham concern himself about erecting the house! Let him carry on, if he wanted, with that insufferable, hairy young ape!

All along the clayey shoreline were footprints of game, deep cloven hoofprints of buffalo; smaller, sharper ones of mule deer and antelope; here and there the spatulate impression of a bear's paw.

Yes, this was game country! Every now and then there was the sound of a startled grouse or partridge among the dry leaves of the brush at his left. They would need game too—fresh meat—a change from their monotonous fare of dried pemmican.

The sounds of building had long since died away as he neared the confluence of the river and the little "Pymmes Brook" tributary—"Tea" river, he heard some natives call it. The stream would contain fish in quantities, he knew, flowing out of Lac Ste. Anne where was fish supply for Indians far around. He could see them—fish⁷ jumping high in the rapids as he came in sight of the stream.

The water here was a clearer blue than in the broader Saskatchewan. It reflected the brilliant yellows and reds of the birch and poplar on the banks. And that dark cluster

of firs too—nestling between—Gad, wasn't it effective? Yes, the country had beauty too, a wild, lonely charm.

So still, no one near, just himself and the wild life about. "This," thought he, "was the lure of the wilderness. This took men—himself included—from safe, comfortable homes and occupations, to the hardship and unpredictable dangers of Rupertsland."

He walked along upstream for quite a distance, then stopped to kill some grouse. It was scarcely sport—they came so near. After placing the birds in his shoulder bag—their plump breasts warm to his touch, he reloaded his musket and continued strolling beside the stream.

He sat to rest awhile at the edge of the stream, reached for his pipe and tobacco—touched that seed packet again. He brought it out, viewed it carefully. Some strange whim, the natural urge to uncover that closed to view, bade him open the packet. As he slit the stitches one by one with a knife, he pondered upon the care and patience some hand—a woman's hand—had taken to sew them.

Inside were two small packets, on one was written "Eytisus-scoparius—(Yellow Broom)," on the other "Crataegus-oxycantha—(White Hawthorn)." Underneath the latter was written in the same fine hand: "He who plants a tree plants love"—this in delicate quotation and bracketed below was: "Bestow on him, the sower of these, its richest blessings. N.P."

"Humph! Poetic phraseology, forsooth! 'N. P.'—Netta Prudham—Jack's older sister. Dear, sentimental girl!" Had she a thought for him? He liked to think she had. He saw her again, slim, gray-eyed, sitting with her hands quietly folded in her lap. In the background was that well-appointed tea table in the drawing room of the "Firs,"^s the Edmonton home of the new deputy governor of the company. They, as guests that afternoon, had talked much regarding their coming voyage across the seas, but Netta had added no word to the spirited conversation. Her composure, poise was

admirable. What was finer than an English gentlewoman: modest, self-effacing, but withal understanding and sweet!

After a few years of profitable fur trafficking here with rich rewards granted him by the Company, he'd go back—take the North road to Edmonton, be once more in the Prudham garden, sweet with the scent of blossoming hawthorn trees, and there see Netta again, seated quietly with hands folded in her lap, waiting—waiting for *him*. He liked to think of her that way.

“‘Love’s richest blessings!’ For her brother—or mayhap for himself?” He gave vent to another derisive snort—with women—their own women not in the land? He recalled to mind the black nights on the shores of the bay upon their arrival at York factory, with their men going out among the camp-fires, returning fighting drunk—kicking, biting, scratching—mostly over women—Indian women, some mutilated,⁹ their noses cut off by suspicious irate spouses. Good God! How could they take those unsightly, unwashed creatures! Drink! Yes!—if one were drunk enough, then they might seem less repugnant.

The acrid smell of over-ripe cranberries was heavy in the air. How easily its noisome smell fitted the wild environment! Without realizing, he contrasted its thick, tangy odor with the delicate scent of an English hawthorn tree, the seed of which now lay in his palm—Netta again!

The sun was now low on the horizon. He got up to return his way to camp. Before turning his steps he leaned to the stream to drink of it, saw a beautiful fish, its silvery scales shining like enamel, idling in the shallows below. Its broad fins undulated softly in the water.

He would catch it with his bare hands! Lowering himself craftily, hands poised over the prize, he became as excited as a boy.

Suddenly, a swift whanging whine whizzed by his ear—something plopped, struck the water—disappeared below.

An arrow!

The man straightened like a shot, turning swiftly to face his assailant. He could see no one—hear no sound. Was that distant galloping hoofs—or his thudding heart?

Musket caught in hand, he charged violently into the protecting thicket behind him. White-hot fury possessed him—attacked to kill without warning—without cause! Where was the protection—the prestige of the great Company *here*? Hah!—easy enough to speak of it, think of it in those terms, thousands of miles away. There was only one's trusty musket to rely upon in these parts. He'd shoot the first hell-red Indian at sight! Anxiety sharpened his senses. He peered cautiously into the dense thicket about him as he climbed on stealthily upwards.

At the top of the embankment he found the peaceful, rolling prairie hills in the quiet dusk mocking his mood. He strode on, still angry, walking in a general cross-country direction toward the valley of the Saskatchewan. He dare not return along the river's edge as he had come, enshrouded in the dimness of thicket—a killer Indian could too easily be lurking in ambush.

The rolling plains stretched before him, seemingly endless. Far on the distant horizon he saw pale plumes of smoke from an Indian encampment, and nearer, was another, that must come from the Northwest post. He hurried on. When he finally reached the brow of the hill overlooking the big river, an immense white cloud of mist lay suspended over the broad valley. The light was nearly gone now, except for a silvery twilight coming from the western sky. Amazing how the light lasted so long after sundown! He was grateful for it now. Soon he would need to go down the steep embankment to their camp. The mist, the darkness, made it difficult to find the way. The island and other determining features of the camp's locality, were obliterated by that pall of mist. Walking faster and faster, the man cursed his uneasiness of mind.

A slope, a gentle ravine, led towards the river. He

followed it down, assuring himself that he was not afraid. Yes—his guess was right. Their clearing lay to the right—not far. He even heard the distant voices of men. His relief was genuine. Now he realized that he had walked all that distance without even pausing to smoke his pipe. Again he reached in his pocket, and touched the seed packet. This time he chuckled aloud. He'd plant some, by gad, here and now! The soil of the ravine was rich, and it would offer shelter for growth.

Again the cranberry smell pervaded his nostrils. As he passed through the shrubs, their rotting clusters struck against him stickily. He found himself furiously dragging, pulling up their roots; pushing the loosened soil over the seeds dropped from the packet. "Plant a portion of them anyway," he thought. "I mustn't deprive Jack of that bestowal of 'richest blessings.'" He kicked deep holes in the soft, damp soil beneath the underbrush of the slope; then trod it firmly over the seeds with his feet. How ridiculous was this performance, planting without a tool!

Then he stopped—rigid—in a chilling terror—something moved in the underbrush! Something coppery pale—horrendous—that slithered like a reptile on the ground. The man felt hackles on his spine—his musket *behind* him—out of reach! Almost without knowing he had raised his knife, was snarling threats at the awful thing before him. There was a sinister stillness, more terrible than sound. Slashing the brush this way and that in a panic he caught a glimpse of eyes—black and startling—*human* eyes—fixed upon his brandished knife. Treading the underbrush apart, he peered closer; saw there the naked prone figure of a young Indian stretched full length, one hand pressed against his side where showed a dark shine of blood. He was wounded!

"Get up! you brute!" Tomison shouted at him. "Can't you walk?"

The agonized eyes stared back, uncomprehending. It was

clear that speech, his own tongue, was futile now. The white man tried gestures: motioned "to arise"; "to go ahead"; "to follow"; useless!

He must fetch help—Alphonse could interpret. This thing looked dark and treacherous. That arrow—shot at him! Could this youth offer a clue? But this Indian had no weapon; seemed helpless, weak from loss of blood.

Urgency gave him speed—the Englishman's long legs took the remaining distance down the ravine to the river in leaping bounds. After, when he finally found their path that led upwards, he ran, almost in panic, to camp. But when he came to the opening of the thicket to their clearing, panting from his run, he was held by what he saw.

The cabin was completely built! A roof pointing to the sky was made of neatly laid, bark covered slabs. *The men were inside.* In spite of himself, Tomison felt a pleasurable thrill at the sight. The men must have worked like fiends!

A house—*his* house—to enter! A buffalo hide covered the entrance door that faced him. From within came raucous sounds—the long-drawn-out, bawdy callings of drunken men. To meet with those men became at once altogether distasteful. Tomison's annoyance returned as he stood listening.

"Yah-ah-ee-hee—I'll hae 'er—take 'er—." It was the voice of MacDonald. "Sissis, the river girl"—his voice fell to the low intimate tone of a stage whisper, "and a luscious bit she is—I've spied her in the forest—takin' to tetherin' *hersel'* alane, she is. She's ripe—and like ripe peaches her 'totoos' are in the sun!" "M-m-m-m!" the others exclaimed, with appreciative smacking of lips. The Scotsman's voice resumed its former bragging: "Nayther my musket, horse nor wares shall I gi' him—her de'il of a fayther, only yon keg wi' what remains in it!"

"Fill it with the river!" cried the breeds, and there were long howls of insane laughter. There came the sound of the rum being poured.

"A drink to your absent one who busies himsel' wi' plantin' a garden—sweet scented garden posies! Now if 'twere the heather! Ah!—the heather, purple, bonny and sweet!—I smell it now," he added, with little puppy-like whimperings of nostalgia. What a strange admixture of sentiment and barbarism was the man!

"Heather—*hic*—heather indeed!" hiccoughed Prudham in disgust. "It's the skunk with her brood you smell, 'neath the floor!"

"Soon 'twill all be made as you told of your ain fine hoose, my friend"—a resounding slap on his comrade's shoulder—"wi' a garden and a cup o' tea—tea-e-ee-eel" in rasping, raucous, mocking glee.

Tomison ground his teeth, kicked aside the hide at the doorway, and entered. The half-breeds were sprawled about on the floor. Only Prudham and MacDonald were seated at the newly built table and bench. They gazed up stupidly—Prudham as melancholy as an owl. MacDonald waved his mug in greeting. "Aye, I've awaited ye lang to pay my adieux." Then his eyes, and Prudham's too, suddenly focussed intently at something behind him. Involuntarily, Tomison turned about to look. There stood the wounded Indian boy.

"Paka!" MacDonald exclaimed.

The Nor'Wester *knew him!*

Even in the dimness of the cabin the beauty of the youth's bronze physique was unmistakable.

In an attitude instinctively dramatic he fell to one knee, raised an arm above his bowed head and intoned deep, sonorous words. Even without understanding them, Tomison felt pity for him. One hand was still held against the arrow gash wound at his side. A simple shell ornament glowed pearly pink below his brown heaving throat.

Jean, Picher, Alphonse roused to a befuddled attention. They, and MacDonald too, asked him questions—leaned toward the Indian with much curiosity and some sympathy.

"What does he say?" Tomison cut across sharply.

"He for long time stolen boy—now he go far to North where Cree people are. He hide in bush, no eat for days. Bad Blackfoot try to kill heem." Alphonse kept mumbling along, feeling for words.

"*Kill him?*"

"Ah! But this one is guilty," interjected MacDonald, shaking his head in ironical solemnity. "Verra guilty, verro bad—found crawling beneath the tent of Sissis his loved one, with narry a hide to offer her father but the one he's in. Yohoh!" He became jocular. "Though no doubt the companion piece of his tribal token—that shell—now hangs below the fair one's neck!"

He lumbered to his feet, swaying a little unsteadily, then heaved the rum keg from the table to his shoulder. He gave the Indian a sharp command, and nodded reassuringly to the others. "He'll be gone—I'll see him awa'—cross him o'er the river this verro nicht—one rival less wi' which to contend!" He blinked knowingly at Prudham.

Tomison couldn't resist one question. "If he goes North why cross him over to the *south?*"

"Huh!" sniffed the Scot in a contempt he didn't conceal. "'Tis little ye ken o' Kinistineux strategy! If one be bound north, there must first be made a bewilderin' maze of footprints on the opposite side; back to this, he'll slither on his belly like an eel—leave only the trace of a beaver along the banks."

He reached the door, swept the hide aside, turned, saluted them in a mocking gesture.

"I thank ye," he was killingly polite—"for courtesies received at yer Edmonton House!"

He was gone.

The young Indian slipped out after him.

Tomison's stare continued upon that doorway. Profound

and complete astonishment was upon his face—the narrow jaw dropped slightly. “*Edmonton House?*”

• • • • •

On that night of late October in the year 1795, a cold full moon shone down upon the valley beside the newly-built cabin of the Company traders. Now all was silent, even the river of the swift-running current, the “*Siss-iss-kat-ge-wahn*,” flowed more quietly in the stillness of the silvery light. Mist, that was cradled in the valley at twilight, had vanished, nor would it reappear before the morrow’s rising sun.

Along the banks the trees cast dark eerie shadows upon the river shallows that lay glassy-clear between the shore line and long pale bars of sand. A beaver swam out noiselessly from a lodge of stark white tree boles, his gliding up-raised snout rippling the becalmed waters into trailing wide-spread arcs behind.

As noiselessly, too, a tiny birch canoe glided along the shadowed shoreline, its paddle scarcely sounding as it was lightly dipped to water by a kneeling Indian girl. Immobile as an image was the slim figure of the river girl, Sissis, as she guided her bark with infallible grace and care beneath the protecting dark of trees. And with her stillness was the intentness of a ferret, listening for the slightest sound that might foretell danger.

The sudden splashing sound of the beaver’s broad tail spanking water, startled the girl for a brief moment. Then she smiled easily. It was only the furred one’s protest against intrusion upon his domain.

In truth it was good that the beaver was there making the noises that could conceal those of her own making and those of the fugitive Paka as well. Paka, who was an enslaved captive Cree of another tribe, was now fleeing from them,

hiding in the valley to decoy his followers. Tahanes was hunting him. The girl tensed in dread. She had seen Tahanes go galloping from their camp each day, ready, nay anxious, to kill the youth who had won her favor; the youth upon whom they had forced the menial tasks of women, but who had, in the course of two seasons of snow, grown taller and handsomer than any male of her tribe. A yearning came over Sissis—and anxiety. Where was he now? Had he foolishly attempted the crossing at their fording place, where the watchers, the sons of Tahanes, would surely find him? The girl's solemn face became stonily fixed, thinking of what may have befallen her lover should he have come into the hands of Tahanes. His sharp cruel face came before her eyes—the proud, scheming man of her tribe who, in bartering for her hand, was piqued and angered by the cause of her reluctance.

The paddle dipped rhythmically, soundlessly as Sissis strove to reach a secret hiding place on the river valley bank—a cave-like retreat of which Paka knew. It lay well concealed behind dense brush with its opening cunningly overlaid by overhanging tree roots. Paka would be safely hidden there.

Coming to a certain bend of the river, the girl beached her canoe by a small creek bed. Then, moving quietly as mist, she felt her way toward the trysting place. She slipped smoothly through the brush like a cat, and avoided ever-ensnaring branches by parting them with caution, her hands outstretched before her to find the special signs of direction; a broken branch, a jutting stone, or gashes on trunks of trees. Here the night's clear moonlight helped—she felt the signs—touched them all.

Though even before reaching the trysting place, she knew instinctively that her lover was near and had already been there before her. *He had already crossed the river.* How?

The girl slid easily into the opening of the hollowed-out embankment and crouched down beside its inner wall. Long she waited thus, listening the while. From afar she could

hear the bugling cries of elk calling to one another at this season, their strange mating call. Their harsh agonized braying fell dismally on the cold night air.

Sissis hunched her shoulders and shivered. Then without a single warning sound, suddenly Paka stood there before her. Startled, and immeasurably relieved, she stared at his strong, lean figure silhouetted in the moonlit cavern's mouth. Neither uttered a word. Gradually they drew nearer each other—fearfully—anxiously. The girl's fingers reached to his wound and touched it gently, pityingly. The youth looked at her and shrugged with exaggerated unconcern—*that scratch?*—altogether nothing! He scarcely knew it was there—at least not any more—not since the great and generous "Meec-dohnah" had laved it with healing oil.

Their low murmured whispers went on, intermingled, and then ran together in unrepressed eagerness. They had much to impart. The happenings since his departure from the encampment were related to the girl—with the hunger, discomforts, and dangers all fittingly belittled—in the way of man with a maid. Sissis learned that it had been "Meec-dohnah" who had this very night crossed him to the south bank and then returned him, after he, Paka, had imprinted many misleading tracks with his own bare feet. Now, see? The feet were moccasin-covered; he displayed them with gratification—given him by the generous-hearted "Meec-dohnah." Moreover, the bright-haired one, that "one-arm-small" man, promised to hold the demon Tahanes in long useless bargaining talk on tomorrow's day, while he, Paka, could speed far beyond further reach of his enemies.

The youth's tone began to take on a boastful note as he described how he would evade his pursuers, the skill he would employ hunting, and, too, of the riches and plenty of his North land.

His enthralled listener remained silent, lips parted, eyes staring wide in the darkness. Sometimes she smiled in secret delight over his use of an odd word from his own tribal

tongue. His fingers stole to her throat, caressed the shell piece that had come from his great northern waters—deep rivers that flowed between high banks of shining ore. They forgot their fears as the night wore on. Their murmuring tones became less hushed as a feeling of security in their hide-out strengthened.

Once they were startled to instant silence and a moment of stark terror. They heard a noise of someone approaching through the bush—the tearing and crashing down of branches. The boy's lithe length became as taut as a drawn bow string. The girl's breath caught and held. Stealthily she took from her waist a sharp skinning knife, held there with broad babiche, and passed it to her hunted lover's hand. With the sound of danger coming nearer and more frightening they heard a piercing, awful cry of an elk. From the cave they saw the huge lunging creature dash by, and others in pursuit, their hooves clacking sharply against the stones of the river shore below. Overwhelmed with relief, the two in hiding clung to each other, and shook in silent laughter, overjoyed that disaster had not befallen them.

* * * * *

The sun stood high in the sky at noonday as the Indian girl trod the dried yellow grasses to her home encampment. The high jagged ends of clustered tent poles showed above the brush on a knoll ahead. Some light wisps of smoke curled lazily upward from the tepees.

Sissis, deep in thought, walked slowly like one in sleep. Now, in the hard brightness of the sun, the night with its ghostly light was an unreal dream. On waking at daybreak she found Paka gone. He had gone without one farewell or a single sign of whence or where. But the girl felt no bitterness. In her heart was a new, deep content. With eyes narrowed from the glare, she scanned the distance to the North. Some-

where beyond that north horizon was the fleeing youth who, one day, would come back to her.

Sissis walked slowly on, still entranced, with her eyes a-dream.

Beside the tepee the women pounded meat strips to tenderness, their wooden pestles sounding "*thup, bup, thup, bup*" inside the hollowed log. Sissis saw her mother's look of quick satisfaction upon her return. Mother Neetwah, short, fat and fiercely energetic, went on beating the buffalo meat into a pulpy mass. The girl dropped to her knees to help the pemmican making. "*Thup, thup, bup, bup*" thumped the beating sticks, drowning out voices from the nearby tepee.

Only now and again could the river girl hear her father's grumbling voice in there, intermingled with that of a strange man speaking in an even stranger tongue. The visitor used the words of many tribes and little of her own. The tepee bulged at one place with the squat shape of a rum keg. The men were trading.

Mother Neetwah sometimes paused in beating to listen. She reached for a vessel, scattered berries into the log's long trough, and then bent a cupped ear towards the tent. The berries were squashed and beaten down by the five pounding pestles and Sissis saw the meat spread out thin as birch tree bark inside the log. She paid no more heed to those voices from her father's tepee. They rose, then lulled, and rose again. The girl's senses dulled and wandered in an endeavour to relive the moon-white night. Suddenly she and the beating women were all startled by a loud exultant laugh from the tepee. And where the keg had protruded so sharply, the deerskin hung slack once more.

And as though upon a signal, Mother Neetwah quickly rose, dragged her daughter up and gripping her arm fast, led the girl into the tepee.



Chapter Two

A York Boat is Returned to The Fort

TRAMP, tramp, lean and trudge—trudge, trudge and lean again on that taut tumpline—they tracked the endless upstream shoreline towards a setting sun.

Nine men, heads lowered to sun ray's slant, filed on in the slow measured tread of fatigue which marked each day's end of the boat pull, while weariness, too, had sometime since brought speech, grown fragmentary, to silence.

The peace and beauty of the wilderness solitude was all about them, with the great winding river of the prairies at their side shimmering in the golden light of that late October day. Only the occasional creak of the steersman's oar on the big loaded packet midstream could be heard over the "clup, clup-clup" and scrunch of heavy feet against river stones and gravel. These followed no path offering an easier way. For the river, with fickle and varying water levels, erased each season the deep footmarks of plodding trackers who had been dragging boat loads upstream for more than a half century. During that time, once each year, except for the four when European wars waged hottest, the trackers had come to the northerly fur posts of the upper Saskatchewan; building and rebuilding, as necessity bade, along its banks at the special places for easy fording.

That log cabin of Tomison and his men had long since been razed to the ground by pillaging Blackfeet and Cree. In the years that followed, successors to it were built, within distance of a score or more miles either up or down stream. And always, the white men of the Hudson's Bay and Northwest companies—the two rival fur trading companies—sought to build near each other for help, near also where Indians forded the river and beaver could be found in plenty.

But not until the companies united were those buildings of size and permanence built on a commanding promontory on the north bank up the river. The Crees called it "Amisk-wachis," the Slave Indians "Amakowis," while the old 'Nor'westers,' including their present hard fisted, hard fighting Hudson's Bay factor, called it "Fort des Prairies." The stolid Orkney workers who came in numbers across the Atlantic by Hudson's Bay boat, as did John Grant, knew it simply as "Beaver House."

The lead man of the nine was very tired—he stumbled often.

"How much lighter," thought John, the Orkney tracker, "is Paka's step than the others!"

Paka, their aged Nahathaway Indian tracker, trod ahead of him in knee-bent, springy step, his light moccasined footfall sounding a mere "slif, slif, pat, slif" as flexible moose-hide met and rose from ground.

John listened—watched that rhythmic uplift of heels before him—essayed an imitation in gait. It was hard! Well nigh impossible in his muscle-weary condition—yet it was true, he knew, that the old lean Indian could walk for days in just that manner, without rest or food, out-distancing any white or breed. John knew his age neared that of a man's full span of life. Reaching the fort half-starved at river break-up that spring, the Chief Factor had learned through his interpreter¹ and a missionary² that this lone runner had come from unbelievable distances north, even far beyond the Old Establishment of Peter Pond,³ to tell of the far away "Metal River"⁴ and its abundance of precious metals. In an eagerness to describe, he had grasped a beaver coin⁵ from the hand of Chief Maskepetoon, placed it on a rock and struck it a blow with his hachet—flattening its edge. Then he shook his head, puzzled over the lack of malleability of this alloyed coin, which the chief, with a rueful grunt, replaced in his pouch.

No less had been Paka's wonderment at the glass panes of the factor's huge house⁶ in the centre of the picketed courtyard—he had run his open hand over their shiny surface, then showed surprise that his palms remained dry. There was tittering from the squaws who beheld him in this. The "Indian-wise" factor, however, had not shown levity, but straightway beckoned the gaunt old creature indoors, whereupon the awed Indian had gone at once to feel the window inside to confirm the result of his investigations.

Again the factor had shown his sagacity, come May, in sending the big Woods Cree with the fur brigade to York Factory to carry the word east.

"Anyway—hire one Indian and you have his tribe" that fiery rotund man of Eire⁷ had said.

John raised his face to feel the sun's caressing warmth,

viewed the vast distances about him with autumn's mortal glory on bush and plain. He had come to sense the repose which the immensity of the prairie brings at this golden hour of sundown. It had become *his* hour during the long summer's trek—his hour to think his thoughts—dream his dreams—thus, magically, the stones he trod became neat fences encompassing planted fields of grain; droves of grazing sheep and cattle took the place of roaming buffalo. A fine farm house stood on the bank that would be built from logs of trees he now skirted daily on the river's banks; peopled with the good and friendly faces of those he loved at home. Home! His heart suddenly filled with nostalgic longing. He saw the hillside town of Stromness⁸—a row of low stone houses nestled close to the sea—across the bay the purple banks of Hoy. He stood again upon their little jetty at sundown with Elspeth's hand in his, and again they were tracing the profile of Scott, the poet, in Hoy's rugged outline against the sky. Had he departed solely because Elspeth was no longer there? She had gone away to England to remain in the home of a bereaved relative. His mother had noticed how much he missed her:

"Ye're sae restless, lad," she had said.

To cross the sea on a boat in the harbour would fulfil a wish he had cherished since childhood. John remembered the last look he had of the bay at Stromness. It was in the eerie light of a midnight sun in June over a year ago. His mother and father had been with him in the dinghy, rowing to the Company trading boat that lay in the harbour. A fleeting shadow of pain came across his features as he recalled that leave taking with his mother. Quiet, submissive always, her hand had touched his. "Ye'll do yer best, Laddie?" is all she had said, then turned away her pitifully working face.

Well, that he would. He would exert himself to the utmost—work to his fullest power each day—strike out boldly for himself at the close of this three year, thirty-pound contract with the Honourable Company—build boats of his own,

blunter nosed and of shallower draft than the one at mid-stream, so constantly snagged with the embarras of these northern rivers. He would follow the endless Saskatchewan to its source, where its great medial moraine in the glacial field foretold the river's cleavage and a dual course through the plains below. There, surely, in its upper reaches would be gold to find? Or he'd become a freeman, hunt, fish and trade—Paka knew where the game was plentiful. What a life of freedom this country could provide! A freedom so worthwhile—fully compensating for hardships to be endured—the constant watchfulness against Indians. He smiled wryly at a recollection of his childhood. While visiting a cousin in the north of Scotland they had walked in the forest and surprised a deer, but even as children they had crept away stealthily—almost with a feeling of guilt. The deer was the owner's deer, the prized property of the estate, and they—trespassers.

Well, here a man could hunt and kill game to his heart's content with no one to say him nay.

A violent jerk on his shoulder brought him sharply from his reverie. A subsequent slackening of the tumpline sent him sprawling. The others, too, were thrown against the sharp stones of the river bed. They groaned, cursed, while piercing cries of panic came from the boat.

"The rope! Get the rope!" They screamed. Orders were shouted—quick—sharp. John plunged waist deep into the river to retrieve the broken rope-cable. The water was fairly clear. He forced his arms down low and luckily felt the ravelled end about a submerged log, slimy with river clay. Shouts of joy came as he lifted the rope-end high above the water's surface for them all to see. "Ah-h-h", they breathed in relief and other trackers came quickly to his aid.

Borgereau, steersman, was clinging desperately to his long oar, now thrust down almost perpendicularly into a sandbar beneath the boat, which "God be praised", held the bark from turning completely to the current. The whites of his eyes showed in his anxiety. Those in the boat had felt that

sickening twist as the prow swung about after the guide-cable had snapped and then gone slack. They remembered, too, that rapids had been passed a few miles back.

"Johnny the Scot, a 'tamn' fine man!" mused big Borgereau, voyageur of river trips since boyhood. Why, that Orkneyman had nearly equalled what he, himself, a "Canadien", could do, what in fact, he had done many times in those good by-gone days of the North West Company, bringing home the canoes⁹ to old Fort Augustus". Ah! Those were real days! Then there was something of joy and adventure in the river work—the 'regale' was not forbidden¹⁰ and their chansons had made the river banks resound! But now—the sedate English—bah!

With the rope repaired and tracking resumed until the men could become sufficiently dried for night's encampment, the cargo was once more toilsomely travelling under way towards its outpost destination. The weary trackers through their unwonted exertions of that moment of danger were spuriously refreshed.

"Tomorrow, 'pour certaine' now, we reach again our Fort des Prairies.¹¹ Mon Dieu! I am happy!" murmured the steersman down his trembling oar.

John, his back chilly with the wet of streaming garments ("as though I'd been gatherin' the kelp at home," thought he,) was also warmed inwardly at the thought of their approaching arrival. He visualized rounding the last big bend of the river—the palisade in view—heard the musket fire of salutation,¹² answered by the heavier fire of the bastion gun—saw the crowd of people running down the embankment—the bright dresses of Indian women mingling with the sombre attire of the 'gentlemen' of the Company. Then the cargo would be discharged and a holiday declared for all by the Chief Factor, who would welcome them in all the heartiness of his nature. Everyone would question about the trip. "How long since you left Fort Pitt?" "Did you stop long at Fort Carlton?" "Let us have the mail first!" A positive

luxury of excitement would prevail. Almost certainly someone would tell about that encounter they had had with a mother grizzly¹³ bear on their way out. Now that was a tale to tell! Let them laugh at Paka's bow and arrow *now!*

Mother of God! What might have happened to them if, when the lead man's musket had failed to discharge, the point of his arrow hadn't flown straight to the throat of that fearful upraised oncoming beast? Zounds! What a scene it had been! That terrific whirlwind of flaying paws and claws with body convulsed in the agony of a death struggle! Then the final sag of big furry belly and limbs relaxed to stillness; Paka remaining calm while the others stood unnerved, trembling. John saw again that remarkable Indian putting the bear's head bones to the water as a token to the Great Spirit, 'Keechi Manitou' of bears. Somehow it had seemed right and fitting. They, one and all, had respected the simple rites of their deliverer.

But now they were safely near their destination with much of goods and provisions for Indian trade for another wintering at the big 'Beaver House.'

"Beaver House!" The Orkneyman realized he hadn't thought of it as "Edmonton" house as did all the Englishmen of the Company along the river posts from York Factory on—the men who were associates of Tomison and the elder Prudham, builders of the original post.¹⁴ Rowand, the present factor of their post, who had built larger and better than any, was, after all, once a North-West Company man and no doubt was somewhat loath to dissociate the site with the name, "Fort Augustus", the former "Northwest" name of the post. Well, whatever the name, the sight of the big gabled roof rising above the palisades tomorrow would be good.

Would that Wesleyan parson¹⁵ still be at the fort, toiling on his Indian Bible—so diligently making stencils by hand for printing Cree syllabics? And that red-haired artist?¹⁶ Had he remained there painting the Indian scene?

Thoughts of a fine repast that would grace the great dining-

hall table were even more heartening, after so much of the dried pemmican¹⁷ he had fared upon these past months en route. In all likelihood they would have delicacies such as moose tongue and beaver tails with something of wild fowl for the supper tomorrow night. After that who would not be ready for the rollicking merriment to follow?

But hold! There was one of them who might not join in these joyous festivities of the home-coming brigade. He who would receive that letter in the mail packet so heavily bordered in black! Jack Prudham, the Company's clerk-accountant. 'Young Jack' he was known (though actually older than himself) to distinguish him from an older relative of the same name who had been in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company for four decades¹⁸ but who was now retired.

The letter could mean only one thing—the death of a near relative. The winter express¹⁹ had brought him many letters from his home in England, but this time there was only this one eloquent of sad portent.

Poor Jack! So debonair and carefree always, with the polished grace of manner that won him popularity with everyone, from Chief Factor down to the humblest squaws, from whom he would evoke little surprised giggles by a proffered gallantry; and never was he roused to unseemly anger nor heard cursing like the other men at the fort. He was, in short, their beloved 'boy'—indulged by all, like the youngest of a large family, thought John.

And how he could fiddle, dance and sing! A real Godsend he was on those long winter evenings when supper over, closing bell rung,²⁰ they sat about altogether stupefied from much solid eating and their hard physical labors. He would cause them to chorus with him those songs and imitations of the 'latest' from London music halls and then how that big room would ring and echo with their roaring laughter and stamping boots!

Always when the entertainment lapsed to a mellowness of sociability and ease he would bring them reminiscences of his beloved Edmonton home on the outskirts of London. An

entire album of pictures with souvenirs would be shown with description to each: "The pretty woman holding a frilled parasol?"—it's mother on my birthday." Here was a silver set given him by great aunt Netta upon his leaving for Harrow, and that was a picture of the pony and cart with Jack himself proudly holding the reins. Another large picture of a tea party in the garden showed handsomely attired gentle-folk strolling before a fine house of goodly dimensions. All, all, so redundant of the charm and ease of English country life.

"No wonder!" John sighed ruefully, "young Jack loves to think of his home and has such a penchant for gaiety." He contrasted, for a moment, these scenes with a view of his own home life in the Orkneys where the stern necessity of daily toil to fend off want sobered the faces of the young and imposed grim and serious thoughts on the minds and features of the mature.

Curiously enough it had been the bachelor grand uncle of young Jack who had persuaded him to join the service of the great Company. John Peter Prudham had come to Stromness in the capacity of Company agent to secure young, energetic men to work for the big fur trading company of Rupertsland. John's father had been well impressed with that elderly gentleman of pleasant mien, who, in younger days, had enjoyed so spirited an interval in the employ of the Honourable Company. He had recounted great tales of adventure relating to the redskins, the rivalry of the two big fur companies and the hunting of the prairie buffalo.

There had been many tales, too, regarding the red-headed MacDonald of Garth, 'Le Bras Croche,' he of the crooked arm, who had split ten score logs in one day for palisading the fort, then trimmed their points to 'murderous fineness.'

All this had fired John's imagination vividly. Defective vision after the fevers had rendered useless his own, as well as his parents' hopes for procuring higher education; already a younger brother had overtaken him in school studies. This

humiliation had added eagerness to his accepting his father's suggestion of a new life abroad.

Then, in the long weeks of crossing, he had found young Jack Prudham a fellow passenger, destined for the same far away Saskatchewan river post.

They had become, through mutual interests, well acquainted, Jack having a goodly number of stories to add to the big list of 'Uncle John Peter's' amazing experiences in the service.

After landing at York²¹ Factory they had shared that novel and strenuous experience of travelling the water route inland; sailing on the Winnipeg lakes, stopping at Cumberland House, and seeing something of fort life at Carlton and Pitt.

Eagerly they had planned to visit the scene of the senior Prudham's factorship, the 'Edmonton' House, within musket shot of old Fort Augustus on the upper North Saskatchewan.

"Aunt Netta wants me to see if those hawthorn²² seeds which she sent along for her brother John to plant, are still producing," Jack had said.

So the two boys, on that last night of encampment on a lovely island, had rowed a small skiff to the north bank and landed at the parklike meadow below the bluff where the two old posts formerly stood.

John remembered that evening well, it had held just the calm, soft, hazy atmosphere as the present one of Indian summer. They had stood on the bank in the quiet solitude of that lonely land with the silvery expanse of water before them going its mighty way eastward through the plains.

The trees found, Jack had become tremendously alive; excited almost to garrulousness, while John, too, had found himself uttering the most astounding of his innermost thoughts. It was as though that vast setting of nature had made human thoughts so small, they confessed them. He'd heard himself telling of the disappointments which had brought him thither, even of Elspeth; while Jack was given to conjecture about the feelings of his relative who had come there so long ago—over a half century ago—when Uncle

John Peter was a youth, as himself. Wherein lay the resemblance to *their* 'Edmonton'? That river—the Lea?²³ Yonder break in the bank, was it bringing the 'wash of Edmonton', made famous in "John Gilpin's Ride"?²⁴—'Upper Edmonton' on the bluff above, presumably? While these few rusty remains of a forge whereat had been made nails, boatlocks, and skin-scrapers could it be likened to that place making the Royal Enfield small arms? Nevertheless, this place was by his uncle's own account, called 'Edmonton' House. It was good to think about. It was good to look upon.

"So he didn't tell you that the fierce Blackfeet had pillaged these forts?" Jack had continued in his agreeably modulated tones. "Perhaps he deemed it unwise to acquaint you, a prospective employee, of the dangers of this western life?"

"Och! a bit of burning, 'tis naught to speak about," was John's reply in the gravely-expressed humour of his kind.

All this took place a year ago. They were both new to the country then and even he, himself, had been something of a tenderfoot. Nights they had slept on their pallets on the boat, sheltered by a big leather tarpaulin. He recalled slight-bodied Jack complaining of his aching hip-bones upon rising in the mornings; missing his English bed, his English bath and what not.

John, thick bodied, muscular, had not found undue discomfort while resting. Right now, a seasoned leather-brown tracker, he was rolled in his blankets on the bare sand, the night too fine to make a tarpaulin rigging necessary and that, furthermore, would bring to unpleasant nearness the loud snorings of the other trackers.

Young Jack, of course, would never really toughen like that. He would remain in the service with the Company receiving rapid promotion because of Prudham holdings. No fourteen²⁵ years waiting for him to become a trader or even a factor. Even in this new wild country, there were inequalities in rewards because of family station. A searing jealousy like a pulling string, drew his heart at this thought. Then that

black-edged letter again came to his mind with the genial smile of him who would receive it; and he was ashamed, with mind relaxed once more.

"It may well be," mused John, "that one of his family has been taken; perhaps the aged grand uncle? The aunt of whom he was so fond?—a great pity if the young and vivacious mother——" Well, tomorrow the letter would be opened by the unfortunate Jack and the melancholy news disclosed.

He was growing sleepy—would need rest for the heavy tracking²⁶ tomorrow—the final day of dragging the boat cargo, after the many of this summer. They had started in the long sunny days of May—greenness everywhere—then followed the bright heat of June and July—with rains coming suddenly, beating fiercely on their bodies. Now the days had become mercifully shorter with softened skies by day and nights cold—quiet. In the dark firmament above him the stars were steely bright. He would shut his eyes and sleep—sleep for the morrow's long hard boat pull to the home fort.



Within the palisaded fort the huge log building known as "Rowand's Folly" loomed darkly in the gray light before dawn. A single yellow light came from a narrow window of the trading house. This squarely built edifice stood hard against the south or 'river' wall of the palisade. In there the trader and his helper were already checking goods from the packet that had come the day before. Without the high walled fort, at the place where the trading room wicket opened, were grouped a number of blanketed forms—Indian men and women. They saw the narrow crack of light showing beneath the stout closed wicket and crowded one another upon the "gossips' bench" before it in a fever of anticipation to behold the coveted goods now inside that trade room: guns,

knives, hatchets, bright new utensils, gay printed calico, colored beads and countless other strange unknown things—brought over staggering distances and brought for *them*. They milled about that locked wicket in ill suppressed excitement, full of noisy conjecture and seemingly unmindful of the wet gloom of a cold autumn morning. For though the storm of yesterday had abated, a fitful rain was falling. It sounded on the low roof of the Bachelors' Hall,²⁷ at the far side of the enclosure, where Paul, the artist, lay on his bunk writhing in sleepless misery. His red-gold head was pressed deep into the pillow and he groaned in irritation: "Great God! That everlasting howling of those beastly dogs in the courtyard! Why don't they beat them to death instead of only nearly so? And that incessant yammering and scurrying of those damned Indians—even long before sun-up! What possesses them? Those gaudy importations of yesterday's boat brigade has unhinged them, no doubt. Wretched creatures, giving their fine fur pelts for beads and tin!"

Though was he less wretched, wanting and pursuing the illusive ideal in art? Better far to be satisfied with raw colored glass beads and shiny tin! Could it be that Wannah, the starry-eyed one,²⁸ was among those gabbling squaws? Paul tried to put further thoughts of her out of his mind. He knew he had suffered enough thinking the whole night through about her. Though in spite of himself, his mind harked back to the ribald laughter of jesting companions on that eve of his departure from home. He had been the butt of their good natured gibes about espousing and bringing back a squaw from the Saskatchewan country. Here he had found this not a matter for jesting. Company employees, even the factor himself, had "espoused squaws." Actually the practice was encouraged by the "Great Company"—it made their men more content to remain in this God forgotten post—all well if they remained—but if they didn't? Quite unbidden then, there came before him the vision of Wannah, the ruddy skinned Indian girl, clad in modish garb of the day: the

incredibly tight bodiced, voluminously skirted dress worn by women in the middle years of the 19th century. The incongruities of his mind's picture only further depressed Paul's spirit.

But how useless, he knew, torturing his mind over the situation. Come daylight he would pack—make ready to go—go with the packet now preparing to take provisions to the mountain fort.²⁹ The factor had spoken of this push up the river so late in the season, as hazardous, dangerous even—but he'd welcome that. It would help to take the fiend of frustration and failure from his mind. At the mountain fort would be many Indians awaiting this provision packet—new types galore, who could be bribed to sit for him—not proud and disdainful of proffered gifts as was this daughter of a Woods Cree chieftain.

That reluctance on Wannah's part to pose had somehow piqued him and made him only the more determined to have her likeness on canvas. Only through the intervention of Factor Rowand himself, who had urged upon Wannah and her impressive father the advantages of learning the white man's language thereby, was she brought to coming, with her lordly father leading, to his studio quarters for the first sitting. It had been on a warm morning in June with rare good lighting. How elated he had been at having before him an extraordinary example of Indian beauty; though the 'roughing in' process had suffered, from the suspicious attitude (how those diabolical superstitions³⁰ persisted in spite of the untiring teachings of a resident priest!) of a watching presence at the doorway.

With genuine relief, Paul had seen Maskepetoon stalk away finally, not to return again, while the girl was left sitting stiffly upright, rigid with shyness and fright. Then he had tried to put her more at ease and remembered his promise to assist her with learning the speech of white people. So he had begun reciting, while sketching her, simple words and sentences: 'The tree—is—tall.' 'The grass—is—green.' She

had only remained stonily silent with eyes fiercely intent upon him. Nevertheless she had made progress in learning English speech, making good use of his own and the priest's instruction. Gradually, too, she had come to take an easy natural pose while he painted doggedly on—sometimes satisfied, more often bewildered and vexed. Once, while stopping to lift a fallen brush, roundly cursing his clumsiness, his upward glance had caught a gleam of mischievous laughter in her eyes.

She was laughing at him! He had reddened in impatient embarrassment. Less and less had become his initial feeling of condescension in dealing with her, with a greater consciousness of himself. During one of the sittings he had asked about words in her Cree tongue: "What was said for 'winter'—'spring'—or 'summer'?"

Eagerly she'd answered. "'Paypun' for winter—'reagamin' for spring—and summer —? Hear! the summer bird tells!" and as though summoned from the heavens had come the plaintive call from without of a bird, singing in two-tone falling cadence: "Nee-pin, Nee-pin."

She'd laughed outright at his look of charmed surprise; a laugh, spontaneous, clear and gay, and that infectious chime of merriment had found a responsive echo in his own easy laughter. They had, it seemed, found things in common with which to be amused and after that they often laughed together at those quaint interchanges of tongue as the sittings continued for the portrait. He had not realized how much they had interested and delighted him until they ceased abruptly, late in summer.

"I go," she had told him, "for 'foe-are' weeks to pluck the tree berry" (the two like consecutive words of different meaning had evidently given her thought) and she promised to bring back with her the earth colours of warmth and richness, of which she had told him.

But when the tepees of her people were once again placed beside the fort, with the grandly decorated one of Maskepetoon

towering above all, she had not returned for the completion of the portrait. He found himself impatiently wondering over her absence and meeting the blackrobe he had enquired about her. The good Father replied he hadn't seen Wannah either.

Her people had brought great quantities of fruit and fish to the trade wicket; the drums at evening had told of their festive dancing. An irresistible desire to see her again drew him to the Cree encampment nearby.

And there in the late summer twilight he had seen her—dancing with the rest, an enchanting figure of life and movement. The clumsy shuffling of the squaws had supplied an effective foil and background for the extraordinary grace of her weaving hands and slight swaying body, which, he now noted, revealed the accented curves of torso and flaring limb lines of feminine maturity. She was no longer Wannah, but an exquisite figure fashioned by Phidias, a flushed bronze Venus, dancing a dithyrambic measure of ancient Greece.

A wish, born of jealousy, to ignore and deny the existence of her alien environment had seized him. With the insistent rhythm of pounded drums in his ears, he had joined the dance.

He had not counted the danger of that step, for now, try as he would, Paul could not take from his mind the memory of that night of enchantment—the night he had danced with the fervour, freedom and abandon of a savage until the fires burned low and the drums were quiet.

Now light coming through the window made the shapes of his stretched canvasses faintly visible. In ghostly reproach they stood about him. Merciful God! Why did the sight of them torment him so? Would they never cause him anything but dissatisfaction and unrest? The rain had momentarily stopped. An afterdrip from the roof-end to the ground sounded a steady 'drip'—'drip'—'drip'—slow, continuous—maddening!

He raised himself upon his elbow to see more clearly the unfinished portrait of the Indian girl. Was it only *yesterday* that he had worked upon it with such feverish intensity? For a while he had transcended himself, inspired by his strange experience, so entrancing, so remote from the commonplace.

The mellow October sunlight of yesterday had blended easily with the rosy brown of her skin and tawny shades of those soft leather garments. He had lifted brushes, lush with pigment, from his palette and painted with swift strokes, strong and sure. The carefully plotted lines and masses of his former composition were forgotten and the fan of a former sketching was stroked out.

A thousand devils! What misguided spirit had prompted him to ask Wannah to hold that wing of a swan—to put a fan, an instrument of an effete civilization, in the hands of this primitive girl of the western plains?

Small wonder, that that well-meaning young English clerk, Prudham, had remarked that the picture reminded him of a portrait of Lady Angela Cheltenham hanging in the Academy. Paul winced again, recalling that remark.

He saw the gracefully held fan, delicately poised fingertips, billowing satins, handsomely carved dais chair and the pleased smile of satisfaction on the face of a sitter of the usual Academy portrait. And he, blind fool, had been using these oft approved conventions in portraying a girl of the wilderness, carefully learning the ways of the white men in the awe and gravity of youth! All this had come to him yesterday as he'd worked savagely on, brushes struck between his teeth, in a frenzy to speed his long wanted ends. The painting took on an amazing brilliance and conviction. He had laughed aloud in pure exultation at the discovery that he was nearing a long-wanted goal.

And then what had come over Wannah? Cowering in fear, making an escape to the door?

He knew suddenly he could not—must not—let her go. With palette thrown he had rushed to seize her.

"Neyah neah heekwah!"²¹ she had shrieked in an agony of fear as she twisted, biting and clawing from his grasp. Thus, Wannah had fled in her terror of him who had now become to her a creature more dangerous than any wild beast, who had eyed her with the ferocious intentness and bared teeth of a lynx of the forest thicket and laughed crazily like one in the madness of drink!

As her fleeing figure reached the palisade gates a vicious gale of dust laden wind had borne down upon her. With dark storm clouds crossing the sky suddenly, nature had brought as quick and violent change of mood as their own.

Then the rain had come. First spitting spitefully with sand and dust against the window panes, and later, dropping more steadily throughout the night.

He was left, bewildered and bereft, not knowing how to go on, nor had the sound of musket fire from a distance announcing the long awaited brigade, aroused him from his deep dejection. The shattering "Boom" of the cannon fire in answer, from the bastion nearby, had sounded like the foretelling of doom over the sound of the storm. Much later he had gone to mess for supper—remembering only vaguely confused details in much talk about the packet just brought home.

Now a little more light filtered through the window.

He had made a decision. He would abide by it.

Paul rose to dress.

Then he fingered his papers, brushes and oils, tried in vain to effect the plain, matter of fact details of his packing. He had sought to bring the minimum of materials for this inland painting trip, but always there was too much clutter for the pack. Spreads of pigment lay in pats and over his palette, semi-dry on surface—oil seepage everywhere.

He heard a faint stir in the adjoining room—where young Jack slept. Poor devil! What a shocking calamity had befallen him. He had not been seen by anyone since the factor had retailed the dire news which his letter contained.

An impulse to go to him came strongly. Dropping materials in hand, the artist walked to the door across the narrow hallway and knocked.

"Jack," he called softly.

No answer came. He opened the door carefully. Jack was sitting at his table, his bunk untouched, head buried in his arms, apparently asleep. Those precious family pictures of his were ranged about him.

"I shouldn't awaken him," thought Paul, and quietly closed the door. Jack was once more left alone with his grief.

The letter had told that his entire family had perished in a fire.

During a night that spring, the aged Aunt Netta, rendered sleepless by a rising wind, had crept downstairs to the warmth of an open fire. Standing close to the flame, her woolly-cotton nightrobe had caught afire. In panic she had rushed to the garden door to gain the open, but there succumbed. The blazing curtains at the opened door carried the flames with utmost rapidity throughout the house to envelop the sleeping occupants above. Not even the stable with horses and pony had been saved, when the alarm could be given. All, all, had gone to death in that frightful holocaust.

This word coming from a cousin of his mother, an executor of the estate, added: that all matters legal and otherwise had been properly attended to, an older brother would probably come home from India; his own return was not expedient.

The story of this terrible happening was heard in stunned silence. The happiness attending a boat's arrival was marred by that frightful tale. The rainstorm which had come when they reached the final bend in the river, made discharging of the cargo difficult—gruelling.

That pleasant homecoming, anticipated by Orkney John, was not to be.

No holiday could be given. The trader had been anxious to press the work at hand, to make the necessary redistribution⁸² of the supplies to the outposts north and to the

west. Word had reached them of a shortage of pemmican and ammunition at the mountain fort and indications of an early freeze-up were prevalent.

So they had all continued work without complaining, welcoming their labours as a measure of penance in face of great misfortune which could, and did, befall one of them.

In the early morning, before daybreak, they could be seen sorting bales, carrying the heavy packs up the steep rutted road to the fort. They met Paul, the artist, on his way downward to the boat landing.

The rain had stopped, but a cold gusty wind blew on them. Mud sucked at their plunging footsteps.

The artist glanced at the heavy gray skies: "There will be more rain or even snow," he ventured. "A miserable day, yes, but in keeping with my thoughts," he mumbled on as he plodded down the hill.

Did he catch sight of a familiar buckskin clad figure at the top of the bluff? Yes, that was Wannah! And just as he had glimpsed her she wheeled quickly and disappeared over the top of the hill. As she receded from view, a fickle wind flicked her long dark hair in an impish wave of farewell.

He had an irresistible impulse to go back, follow her—speak to her again—ask her to forgive his rudeness of the day before, much as he would to a woman of his own kind.

But Wannah was *not* a woman of his own kind. Doubtless she would not even grant him an audience. To return by that road up the hill to her would mean complete and disastrous surrender. He could not see her again.

The Indian girl had retreated from the brow of the embankment in a renewed panic of fright. She ran towards the tents, her heart beating fast—soon these tents would be taken far away for the hunt and then she would be safe from being seen by that white man, forever. Yet a gnawing pain persisted in her heart like hunger. She lifted her hands to press away salty moisture that would come to her eyes. Weeping was unseemly—humiliating! And had not her

father, the chief, said that want and woe would follow wherever her tears were shed?

Wannah held her eyes closed tightly until they felt dry, then opened them. She saw again the dark purplish marks on her wrists and forearm and set her trembling mouth in proud, firm lines.

Walking slowly towards her tent, with arms held tightly to her sides, she passed a sleeping husky, lying nearby, who shivered and moaned from the discomfort of autumn wet, hunger, stripes from beatings, as in response to the mute sufferings of the Indian girl.

He had been so kind, gentle—with glinting lights of laughter in his eyes. Stranger! Those eyes that were like water with the sky upon it! And stranger still, that bright hair, the color of the sere birch leaf in winter! The night he had danced with them she had known no fear of him. He had been as one of her people.

She heard a childish whimper behind her and turned to see her sister Meena, coming from the fort roadway, with her little 'Petôh' beside her. She had come from the landing below to take the child to see his father who would guide the packet to its mountain destination.

Meena's time was near, her face was peculiarly drawn, she carried her full, pregnant body proudly as she walked heavily to her tent.

Wannah lifted the fretting child in her arms—he was so small, so helpless, to be already supplanted by another on the cradle-board! She reached in her pocket bag for a gift to comfort him, and brought out a token coin given her by her father for merit in study. It had been carelessly damaged as though struck by a sharp tool, and the chief deemed it no longer of value in trade.

The baby grasped it eagerly, took it to its little mouth to bite upon.

Petôh could have it now. It had only brought unhappiness.

Wannah felt the warmth of the babe's tiny arm about her neck, his chubby cheek against her own. 'Lucky Meenal' to have what she loved always close and near!

At the landing below, the men had nearly finished the loading of the boats. They continued to busy themselves with coils of ropes, the fastening of tarpaulins, the piling and marking of bales.

"My packs must be on top," said the artist crossly. "I will not have my things broken to bits!"

"He is in one of his moods," they told one another.

Now the factor himself, "the little governor" as the Indians called him, was there to see that all was well and bid the parting ones a 'bon voyage.' His presence brought about an increased activity among the men. They needed to hide their fears and reluctance in undertaking this journey since they feared him even more.

A clamour was heard from the encampment above; they heard a choked animal cry. Running figures came from the tents.

In looking up the men saw a dark figure coming down to them. And as he came, lurching unsteadily down the deep ruts of that muddy road, they saw it was Jack. He, too, was coming in the greyness before dawn to bid them goodbye.

Then, at once, began the far off peal of the bell of matin. Plaintively it rang the tidings of a new day as the wind played fitfully on its varied tones of recession.

Borgereau crossed himself. The other men made clumsy motions towards unneedful tasks to cover the uneasiness of an unwonted emotion. They shifted awkwardly, in man fashion, feeling a deep compassion and at once an impoverishment of expression.

Only the burly factor turned to meet his young clerk, now so changed by grief. Gone was the frank smile, the boyish expression; it was as though in the very reflection of death the elongated sculpture of age was imprinted upon his face.

The keen eyes of the older man were oddly softened and dark as he greeted young Jack before him. His voice, more often raised in sharp authoritative command, was lowered and gentle as he spoke: "Ah, lad, you suffer grievously! It is hard—that terrible, terrible happening at your home!"

Jack stood with downcast eyes and gave no reply.

"I knew your uncle," went on Rowand, while the men on the boat stopped to listen, "a fine man—good—well liked by the Company men at the post, the old Edmonton House down the river—gone these many years. Now *he's* gone too, and all that's left of your beloved Edmonton home is here with us at the fort." Then the expression changed: "but you are at the beginning of life, Jack, the new fort stands behind you"—he waved proudly towards the palisades above—"we shall think of it, always call it, our new "Fort Edmonton."

An enlivening spark came to the boy's stricken countenance—the will to live was re-kindled by a man's humanity to man. Their hands met—showed white, in the grip that ensued.

Thus, as the sun rose and its first pale rays warmed the wet browns of the cut-bank below that far western fort, amid travail, broken romance, and deepest sorrow; a raucous, ruddy infant city, "Edmonton" was born.



Chapter Three

The Duck and Rabbit Dances At Yuletide

THE temperature had dropped during the night. Gore, the steward, making his morning rounds, knew it, even before reading the thermometer hanging outside the fur house. There were signs; a clear sky, no wind, and pale smoke rising straight and high from the dwellings in the stockade. Underfoot, the hard snow squeaked and crunched musically at every step.

"It'll warm a bit, though, after the sun's been up a while—around noon," mused the man, as he jotted down the reading in his notebook, —38°. The little notebook was thumb-worn and blurred with many pencil smearings. First page and inside cover had begun neatly; written there in red ink was "Malcolm Gore"¹—Records—Fort Edmonton, January, 1860." Then pages of daily recordings followed, long lists of figures, temperatures, storehouse provisions and sundry, becoming more and more untidy, with figures going large and sprawly. Only a few unused pages now remained after his last entry, which was dated December 31st, the year of 1861.

The man blew on cold, stiffened fingers, and was about to shove the book and pencil back into his pocket, when he hesitated, opened the diary again and thumbed back pages. There it was: "December 31st, 1860—wind south-west, temperature reading 12°, outfit for Jasper house—20 bags pemmican, 6 packages tea, 3 bags flour," and more items of supplies for the mountain post followed.

Yes, it had been mild, fine, all during last Yuletide season. He remembered that outfit leaving—five dog trains, and the snow almost at melting point. Paka, who could scent a trail like any hound, guiding the lead team—and next had come that decorated cariole with the bride. A pretty sight that cariole—the Indians had outdone themselves to make the thing worthy of their dead chieftain's daughter. Wannah had stayed with her aging parent, refusing to marry while he lived. After his death,² it was said she had wanted to join the Grey Nuns who had taught her—"Something strange there," the steward told himself, "with the old chieftain such a strong disciple of the Wesleyans." Then shortly before the Christmas festivities, the Chief Factor had made the startling announcement that Wannah was going with the Jasper House outfit as the bride of his younger brother, Marcel, who was taking charge there. Both of the de Berriotts were wild young men—marrying might steady Marcel, it was hoped.

The wedding, soon after, was an auspicious one. Her people had flocked to the Okemaw House, watched the ceremony, greatly awed by the bride's proud bearing, clothed in dress and veil of white. Gore was ready to believe that even the groom was a bit afraid of her. She was older than he, nearly thirty, too old for a proper bride, thought Gore. Why hadn't she married young, such a pretty one as she? How had that couple fared in their mountain post? They hadn't returned since, and a new factor had come to take the place of the groom's brother in Fort Edmonton, as Claude, the older de Berriott, had gone off prospecting again. How surprisingly soon people were forgotten when out of sight!

This Yuletide season there were many weddings; what with the Indians getting religion, christenings and weddings were becoming as common as thistles in a field. It kept both parson and priest busy. It gave those Indians just one more excuse for their everlasting feasting, dancing and merrymaking. Just a mite queer, those wedding services,³ with some of the couples already having had several children.

The steward's well-bundled form moved across the enclosure towards the north gate. There were sounds of the fort bestirring. From the kitchens of the Big House came the clatter and bang of heavy copper kettles and pans. To his left, above the constant "yip-yapping" from the dog kennels was heard the distressful mooing of the milch cows. Doubtless the creatures hadn't been milked yet.⁴

"That," said the steward to himself, "is what comes of all this holiday making and entertainment of visitors. Hah! It used to be different in the old Factor Rowand's day. *He* stood for no such nonsense about the work to be done." Their new factor was—gentlemanly—but—!

The iron lock screeched a shrill protest into frosty air as the huge key turned about inside. "Bear-oil it must have again," the Scotsman reminded himself as he jerked and pulled the huge heavy gates inside, first one and then the other. He found a thrill of satisfaction always in this opening. It

was like performing a magician's trick, this joining of their little busy world within the palisaded enclosure to that great one of endless snowy expanse without.

Malcolm Gore stood a short moment—surveyed the wonder of it—limitless reaches of dazzling white stretching before him to the North—unbroken save for two narrow dog sleigh tracks that ran from the gate entrance—one going east to the right, made by the winter express that came yesterday, and one to the left, that had brought the traders and men from the northern posts; Fort Assiniboine, Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche.

The man thrashed his arms across his body to warm himself—looked up the trail, narrowing his eyes in the practised manner of a northerner against the bright glow of an early sun on snow.

Was there a moving object there? He shut his eyes briefly to regain better vision. Yes—that was unmistakably a dog train coming down the north trail to the fort. It would be the priest. He was due. Gore realized he must return to the store room regarding the rations for the new visitors. He turned quickly. On the path coming towards him were Wacan Poordog and Lucy Littlecrow. He greeted them jovially. "What brings you to the fort this morning?—maybe you come for a good wedding?"

They both grinned sheepishly.

"Well, the parson, he is in there—ready—I guess." He motioned towards the factor's house.

Lucy stopped, looked uncertainly at Wacan.

The steward sensed their difficulty at once. "Ah! you want the priest maybe? I think he comes now."

The two walked eagerly past him towards the opening gate to see.

Lucy had witnessed the wedding of her sister by the Methodist parson the day before. It had been brief, solemn, without a proffered drink after. Lucy and Wacan knew better.

Near the store room entrance the steward came upon young Borgereau. Henri had a hang-dog look about him. "Henri, the cows are calling. You better go and do the milking."

The young Metis turned with stiff dignity. "I not milk. Today I am bridegroom."

"The devil you say," answered the steward crustily. "Then bring your bride and have it done with, and get to the milking."

Henri glowered and looked sulky. "Jeanette, she not come, she say she wait for papoose."

"She waits!—for papoose!" the Scotsman barked with a laugh.

He walked on without stopping, came to the heavy store-house door, unlocked it and went inside. Already the portions of goods for the various districts were laid out—Colin Fraser's for Lac Ste. Anne, Laroque's for Fort Assiniboine, Jack Prudham's for Lac la Biche. There were others too, not completed. By tomorrow and the day after all must be in readiness for their going. He began shifting heavy bags. The exact apportioning of goods in right and just quantities satisfied his frugal nature. He enjoyed the work he had to do.

Over in Bachelor's Hall, in the same room that had once been his own, Jack Prudham sat at a table reading a letter. There were two closely-written sheets in Orkney John's incredibly painstaking hand. "Gad, how the fellow had laboured," said Jack to himself, and read on: "*. . . in truth, it was my certain intention to return to the Company's service at your Fort Edmonton when we said our adieux over two years ago (Jack noted the letter was dated June of that year), but many things transpired to bring to pass otherwise. Apart from my dear wife's resolute refusal to leave England to go to far Rupertsland, there had come upon me a profound disinclination to resume the old life of the Fort with all the hardship it entails, as well as the brutality, fighting and animosity which, as you well know, also prevails. Even now I am beset by the memory of that distressful happening at Fort Pitt on*

our journey out to Norway House. You will, no doubt, readily apprehend the incident to which I refer; the tragic death of the old factor in one of his fearful rages. I still see him as he came down the quai, foaming at the lips, shouting in dreadful anger over that brawl which involved his son, John. And all this right where we had landed that very day. There followed, as you recall, the very gruesome details of his burial,⁶ of which I wrote you after landing here.

I, too, had on some occasions felt the brunt of the old factor's temper, but that the man had a certain integrity and a goodness of nature cannot be denied. All these unfortunate and sorrowful experiences are now irrevocably bound and associated in my mind with that life I knew at Fort Edmonton and have led me to the conclusion that the quiet pleasant life here at the Vicarage is a more desirable and fitting one to pursue.

Though I am not likely to receive advancement of stipend, regardless of length in service here, yet there is a measure of joy and content in the tending and nurturing of growing things. So I continue my labours as gardener on the estate which lies nearby the Newbridge Vicarage.

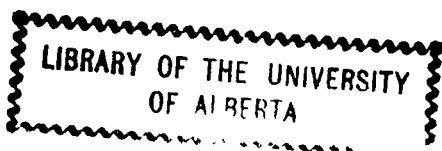
The Vicar, as I have perhaps written you, is a cousin, once removed, of Elspeth, my wife. It was upon the death of Mrs. Newbridge that Elspeth came to the Vicarage from Orkney and remained to assist in the Vicar's household and care for the small and motherless son, Daniel. Daniel, now a lad of twelve, is much away, attending school, and that is well, as my dear wife is now greatly occupied in the care of our new son, as you may suppose. But I must not go further in this brief without offering you my heartiest congratulations on your promotion to take charge of the big northern post at Lac la Biche. I must confess I felt surprise, however, upon hearing that you had removed from the fort, to which you were so attached, and which bears the name of your native town in England. I know of your signal success at the northern post, however, from another (your own modesty not permitting

you to mention it yourself). The new lumber mill should be a profitable departure from trading in peltries. I trust your good fortune in this may continue.

Is it true that the buffalo are becoming more scarce and distant each year, and that beaver are no longer to be found in the river near Fort Edmonton? If this be so, it may come to pass that other enterprises will also be undertaken there. Though lumber may not be as plentiful at Fort Edmonton, there is much promise for coal and gold mining, and even the raising of agricultural products may afford profit. I am not forbidden to hope that at some future day I may again cross the seas, go inland, to behold this prophecy of mine come true. Mayhap our son, whose very name of "Tomison" bespeaks the blood of pioneer and adventurer, will find his way to Rupertsland and carry on the tradition of his ancestors, the Tomisons and the Grants. Pray convey my felicitations to Louis Borgereau, our old steersman, and to the numerous members of his family. I should also like you to give good greeting to that indefatigable guide, Paka, an Indian whom I hold in greatest esteem. Also —."

Other names followed. Jack yawned and put down the letter.

Ponderous as ever—poor old John—now definitely under petticoat rule. How many times had he mentioned his "dear" wife? "These are the thoughts of a confirmed bachelor," Jack said to himself. "Wouldn't I have done the same as Orkney John under the same circumstances?" In all fairness he realized that he, too, would have chosen to remain with a young wife and sweetheart in England—had he had one. But he hadn't. Of all the girls or young ladies (they were so very much young ladies) of his acquaintance, no one stood out in his memory. They remained a nebulous group of strange shy persons, to be eyed at a distance and danced with on infrequent occasions at a dancing class. Unthinkable to have any one of them in his present environment. It seemed likely he was doomed to bachelorhood. In a few years he'd be thirty. Once, five



years ago, he had nearly sailed across himself—had been in readiness, in fact, that time in Montreal.

Jack yawned again and stretched out his long leather-covered legs beneath the table. His gaze travelled down those leather larrigans on his feet. Perhaps he owed it to *them*. He twisted his toes around comfortably in their furred insides, strong, pliable, made to fit him perfectly, faithful in all weathers. And he saw Lionel, his older brother, stepping off a train, bespatted, frock-coated, unctuous as a Company officer should be, glancing in some surprise at his not yet discarded larrigans. "Quite the wild Canadian you've become, m'boy," he'd said. That and other things equally supercilious—equally to be resented, until, when supposed sailing time had arrived, Jack had declined to go.

He saw himself back in London, going to a Bond Street tailor with Lionel, ordering their suits that fall for the spring, ordering again in the spring for the fall, so that all those little niceties of a tailor's art could be well attended to. "The trousers a bit closer here, the waistcoat nipped a little more there and the wings of the lapels slightly sharpened, perhaps?" with Lionel, the older brother—always the more important person—being deferred to. No—he'd chosen to keep his despised boots on.

Outside the building, to the right, the younger Prudham heard excited voices hailing one another. He got up, walked to the window. There amid a melee of carioles, dogs and people, was the priest, just arrived from Lac Ste. Anne Mission. He was being warmly welcomed all around by members of his flock. Alexis,⁶ his faithful guide, dog whip in hand, was assisting in extricating another long-frocked man of the church from a cariole. This person Jack recognized as Bishop Tache, who was returning from his visit to the North. This one proceeded at once, head inclined, in the curious, even, gliding step of the Roman Catholic clergy, towards the house of the priest.⁷ But the beloved little Father Lacombe continued to talk to his people. He was in great good spirits. "A—ah! quelle belle journee," and what wonders already the

day had revealed! On their way this morning a site had been chosen for the new mission, with a view "magnifique"—with hills, trees, river, all lending themselves in perfect accord to the plan. "Et monsignor—he wishes the mission to be called 'St. Albert'⁸ to honor my patron saint's name." He waved arms above his head in a joyous enthusiasm too great to bear.

Emerging from the buffalo robes of a third cariole was yet another. Man or woman? Notably slight. This person was being led towards the factor's big house by the priest. They went to the door of the factor's office room that was on the ground floor.

The sun touched and glinted on long hair that fell beneath a shawl covering—it was a fair brown—white woman's hair! Though she was dressed in the customary fringed leather garb of an Indian girl, the dress was short, terminating well above the knee, worn belted in Russian fashion. Who was this strange refugee⁹ brought from the North by the priest?

Very soon the priest came out from the door, bowed ceremoniously to the factor and hurried across the way to join the bishop at his own quarters.

Would a white woman have kept two paces behind the priest as this girl had done? Jack was thoroughly mystified. He went back to the table, folded the sheets of John's letter, decided against making an immediate reply. Before mess there was to be more dog team racing on the river. Then there were business details to attend regarding his packet. He reached for his cap and outer clothing. The room was well warmed, fires in the building had been kept high all night because of the tenderfeet in his lordship's¹⁰ party, who occupied rooms across the hall. Very superior gentlemen these, with eyebrows worn well elevated.

Lord Southam had even thought to remain under his own canvas, not counting on the severity of the present temperature. Only Indians had the necessary endurance for that. The accommodation at the fort must be crowded to the limit with all the visitors.

Clad in warm fur-lined garb, Jack came out of doors, welcoming the crisp atmosphere of the winter day. He had become a weathered hard-bitten Northerner. "No longer am I a tenderfoot," said Jack to himself with gratification, "'a wild Canadian' in truth, I've become." He walked with the leisurely grace of one who unconsciously conserves walking energy for that time when speed or endurance is required of him. He wondered idly if Lord Southam would have another spill in the snow in the dog races today. He had looked very comical yesterday lying there in the snowdrift without making an effort to rise, letting his men lift him up, helpless as a bundled baby. The Indians had laughed at his predicament. Jack knew that an Indian would consider need of help to rise degrading. Wherein lay the great white man's superiority? As he approached the dog kennels the yelping¹¹ became louder and louder.

* * * * *

Inside the factor's dwelling the great room had been made ready—the plank floor swept, the fire rekindled. Already some of the Indian visitors had foregathered for the day's festivities—the last and best one of the Yuletide—the New Year's celebration. They sat clustered about the floor with many young children who were staring in wide-eyed wonderment at this great room of the Okemaw House.

An impressive room, this dining hall of the factor's dwelling. Its tall square-paned windows¹² were unsoftened by curtains. The broad deal floor was bare of covering. Nonetheless this room had splendour and magnificence. On uprights of the hewn log walls were carved forms of beauty and terror, embodying the primitive legend of the Redman. On softest deerskins were painted in bold rich colour the story of the battle won. And beneath, along the walls, stood massive chests, with deep furred animal skins overlaid; cassettes that had weathered many a voyage in a ship's hold. Home-built dresser.

chairs and table were of ample size, fashioned in simple, strong design. No place this, for little things or trifling thoughts. An abode,¹³ in truth, to win at once respectful admiration of white and red man alike.

Moving carefully between the squatted forms of Indian guests, in prim and narrow black, was Elizabeth, the parson's wife. From a big pewter pitcher she carried, she filled each outstretched cup with strong black tea. All would then be given sweetened biscuits baked with white flour, sprinkled atop with coloured sugar. The little Indian children grasped these from the plate eagerly, holding them tight for a while, not even wanting to bite upon these wonder cakes.

The children—the Indian children—how she loved them, pitied them! Elizabeth wanted to gather them all in her arms, tell them how much better, happier, their lives were going to be with Christian ways and teaching.

She was learning a little more of their speech every day—dear George helping—but it all took long—so long. She sighed.

Tomorrow they would terminate their holiday visit, return to their own mission post seventy miles away. She hoped the carpenter had finished the building of that other bed—Nels was a good builder, but slow—slow.

As soon as more of the building and furnishing was done they could send for their small daughters, Libby and Georgina. Her heart had been all one hollow ache for them on Christmas Day.

Elizabeth stooped to fill the cup of an old withered crone, "Granny¹⁴ Saskatchewan." She was "Granny" to the whole tribe, seemingly. She was said to have mothered the old dead Chief Maskepetoon himself. She must be great-grandmother to most of these children, at her extreme age, Elizabeth thought. Yet always with her babies, and happy so—even has her wasted old neck adorned with an ornament. Elizabeth leaned closer to see better the pinkish shell that dangled on a string of babiche, and spoke a few words of remembered Cree.

The wizened old face lighted up with a smile. "Granny" passed a claw-like hand over the younger woman's features—her sight was failing fast.

Elizabeth took the plate of cakes from the table to give some to older children who were standing a little away from the ones seated on the floor. They were mostly thin-figured boys—their expressions fierce in an attempt to hide their shyness. In another year they would follow only their father. They felt their littleness here in being together with women members of their family. The parson's wife had become acquainted with some of them—she knew their names. There were Onesta, Ponokan and Petôh, the latter outstanding in his proud, slim carriage. They should be running about, playing games, thought Elizabeth, acting like children. She tried to think how to amuse them.

A little later Marcia, the factor's wife, appeared at the doorway. An amiable woman, she nodded pleasantly at her many guests assembled. She came toward Elizabeth. "Mrs. McDougall, will you please come up to my room? I need your help in a matter."

Elizabeth placed the teapot and plate of cakes on the table and followed her hostess. Their long stiffened skirts rustled over the floor as they walked from the room together.

When they reached Marcia's apartment upstairs, a girl was standing in the middle of the room, waiting. "This is Leetah," Marcia said. "The nuns hadn't clothing for her and during her captivity the child has grown. You see for yourself how her leather dress has become ridiculously . . ." she glanced at Leetah's long dangling wrists and figure drawn in awkwardly to relieve the tightness across her breast, "—almost indecently small. I thought between us we could do something for her."

On their way up Marcia had told the strange story of Leetah. Among the Indian children who came to the newly established mission school of the Grey¹⁵ Nuns was this taller girl who was so like a white child. After she had learned some of the French and English speech she had secretly told the nuns of how she

had been stolen by an enemy Cree tribe. Though not being mistreated by her captors, the priest had at once taken it upon himself to make necessary negotiations with their tribal chief for the girl's return to her parents. It had been costly. The Crees demanded a horse, some blankets and a gun¹⁶—the last thing being the costliest prize of all. The little Father had no worldly possessions. But with the parents found and help from the great Company?—the priest had given his word to pay. Even now the factor was giving this vexing problem his attention. "Call in Prudham," he was saying, "the parents of this girl are somewhere in his district."

Marcia was going through her wardrobe. "I have so many dresses," she said, and her voice came muffled from the deeps of hanging garments in the big wardrobe, "but they will not fit her—she is tall—very slight—while I am (she put her hands on her ample hips), well, rotund." She laughed a little—a comfortable fresh-faced woman in her middle forties. She turned to Elizabeth. Elizabeth had started to brush out the girl's long fair hair. The girl submitted to this treatment without ado, braced herself against the drag of the brush and kept her watchful eyes on the movements of the other woman. Fine, observant eyes they were, of dark hazel, smouldering in an uneasiness she was trying to hide. So much was happening to her. First the nuns and now these women! She had liked being with the nuns, but they would keep only little ones and she was now grown tall. Would they find her people soon? If it were only the time of open water she wouldn't be afraid, but now it was bitter weather, the time of heavy snows, when the jack rabbit whistled at night.

"Wait," said Marcia, "I know something that might do. I have kept a few things in the chest—there is a dress I wore as a girl . . ."

She scurried across the room to the chest.

Elizabeth had brought the golden brown hair to glossy smoothness and pinned it in a firm knot at the nape of the neck. Leetah's head in its casque of burnished bronze became

that of a handsome young woman. Elizabeth was faintly astonished. She looked at the warm amber colour of the girl's arched throat. "This girl is more white than Indian, surely?"

"Altogether likely," answered Marcia. "It isn't uncommon. Probably her mother,¹⁷ or she, was stolen when an infant from some of the white settlers down across the border in Montana. Squaws are so fond of children, you know, they steal babies without any compunction whatever."

A shiver ran over Elizabeth's spare frame.

"Yes, I know how you feel," Marcia went on, "but I decided to go with my husband regardless . . ."

"Oh, of course, I felt exactly the same—but children!—how awful to have to sacrifice one's child!"

"My Gwen is thirteen." Marcia became pensive. "We simply *had* to send her away to school."

She showed the dress she had found. It was a quaint robe in rich wine colour of softest cashmere.

A bath was prepared in a huge tin vessel. The two women turned away, crimson with embarrassment, as the girl stripped off her garb. They found a chemise—and shoes—"What shall we do for shoes?"

"My other pair," said Elizabeth. "They'll fit, they're larger than yours." She went to fetch them. All this was exciting, rather fun. They tried the dress. Its close fitting bodice outlined Leetah's budding young form admirably, the skirt hung gracefully in long flowing folds to the floor.

"Oh!" breathed Marcia in delight. She seized a tall Spanish comb of polished amber from a drawer, placed it above Leetah's chignon. The effect was superlative. Elizabeth impulsively unclasped the great Cairngorm brooch at the collar of her dress and pinned it upon the throat line of Leetah's dress, which was cut straight and wide "en bateau." The women were delighted with their handiwork.

"Why, she's quite like an old ancestral portrait, I do declare," burst from Marcia, who was quite elated.

Then they tried the shoes—high elegant shoes with patent leather embroidery trimming. Elizabeth's long-handled button-hook swung smartly around each button—in and out—in and out—two, three, four—going tighter and tighter up over the ankle. Leetah's face became set in consternation. Suddenly she jerked her foot away, tore off the shoe and tucked her feet under the chair. Her eyes flashed. She was mutinous. Marcia and Elizabeth looked at one another uncertainly.

"Well, perhaps they did hurt a bit," said Elizabeth placatingly.

"But not moccasins with that dress!"

"No."

Marcia walked back to the chest. At the very bottom she found boots. They were high riding boots of softest tan leather, flexible as gloves.

"These were my mother's . . ." Her voice trailed off. "I ride so little now."

"Leetah, pull these on!"

Reluctantly the girl drew them on. They fitted. It pleased her. They felt like her moccasins and they went on without the torturing buttonhook. She stood up and walked in them. She heard the heels click smartly on the floor. As she walked by, Marcia turned down the tall boot tops. It made them look like the boots of a Spanish cavalier.

They all laughed, and Leetah, seeing herself in the cheval mirror—the first large mirror she had ever seen—found that person in there very, very funny, indeed. She pointed a derisive finger at that odd creature in front of her and giggled in downright glee. Then as suddenly she hung her head, covered her shamed face with both hands. They pulled her hands away.

"No, no, child, you mustn't cry—see, you're a real young lady now!"

And Elizabeth and Marcia looked helplessly at one another over the bowed head between them. Each had a thought of a young daughter afar and their own eyes were misted over too as they patted Leetah's shaking shoulders. They spoke

soothingly to comfort her, little of which Leetah understood, but feeling sympathy, she raised her head again.

"Now," said Marcia, blowing her nose briskly, "we shall all go down together and have some food."

They descended the broad stairway, Marcia leading, and came down to the big room. There they found all intent upon a wedding ceremony. It was the marriage service of Lucy and Wacan.

"We will join them in the feast, after," whispered Marcia, and they took places to watch with the rest.

And all that afternoon weddings, christenings, went on in that great room of the Okemaw House, interspersed with hymn singing and general rejoicing.

In a far corner sat Henri Borgereau, still dissatisfied, aggrieved and quarrelsome. "Why do they always sing that 'Yasus' song?" he grumbled, and remained a disgruntled spectator to the scene.

"I shouldn't wonder if he weren't a little drunk," observed Marcia. "I mustn't forget to tell Will."

By evening Leetah had become thoroughly at home with the life in the factor's big dining room. At first the Indians had stared her out of countenance—a strange girl in white woman's dress—when Leetah, deciding she had had enough of it, planted herself squarely in front of them and stared them back—hard. Then in sudden drollery she began to poke at them with her quick long fingers until all were reduced to a rolling, giggling mass.

Thus she won them over. She knew how to amuse those children too. In a pantomime of song and dance she told them the legend of Chokopah—who moved the sun; of Tashishish, who rode a fish—changed to a noble bird that flew upwards and now seldom visits the earth.

Late in the afternoon, when the sun had gone and the room was lit only by firelight, a gossiping whisper arose. No one knew how that whisper started, but it grew and grew

until the whole seated assemblage was swayed in little shivers of sadistic delight.

Was it Granny Saskatchewan who started that mischievous rumour? It was known that there was much of guile in her.

The parson's wife had talked long in low voice to Henri, then had gone upstairs and returned carrying a heaping spoon of white powdered crystals, the very potion¹⁸ which the old factor had used to make water boil without fire! It was poison—undoubtedly—to punish a wrongdoer. And Henri, had he not been disobedient—refusing to milk the cows? Granny, herself, had been in the kitchen when the parson's lady, with firm demeanour, had poured the contents of her spoon in a vessel of water heating on the stove. She said to the cook: "This water is not to be touched, it's for the Borgereaus."

Henri and Jeanette with a baby soon to come!

So now the many pairs of bright black eyes turned furtively in Elizabeth's direction, followed her every movement as she unsuspectingly went about the task of helping to serve guests.

Some thought of asking Colin Fraser¹⁹ to play his bagpipes for them.

He came in soon after, magnificent in full regalia²⁰—in the very kilted dress he had worn as the official piper of Sir George Simpson on his northwest tour.

With the scraping of a fiddle, the beating of a tom-tom, the din was terrific. The musicians stood in their accustomed corner. The fiddler, a debonair voyageur, knew it well. There was a well worn place on the floor boards beneath him from the beatings of his boot. Dancing began—the reel of four—the duck dance—the rabbit dance. Elizabeth began to feel downright uneasy—not so much because of the wickedness of dancing—but there was always such boisterousness and abandon in the Indian dancing. Her glance went across the room towards Marcia, the only other white woman there. Marcia wasn't minding—she was enjoying the fun—eyeing her new protégée with evident satisfaction.

Leetah mingled with the children. Marcia sent Elizabeth a little pleased nod towards their girl that plainly said: "Isn't she charming—our girl who looked so gauche this morning?"

Elizabeth felt an answering friendly glow. Their little doing in common had brought them nearer to one another. They might become close friends. She looked again at Leetah, now so wonderfully attractive with eyes alight, cheeks aflame, clapping hands to some strange and primitive dance rhythm of her own. "Ya, Ya, Yak-waw—Yak-waw," chanted the dancer in a low passionate contralto, body alive with movement, though actually not moving, scarcely, at all. The younger children gazed up at her, agape and adoring.

During an interval one lad made so bold as to offer a gift. It was Petôh. He reached it up to this dazzling creature, who was to him a very goddess of beauty. It was a coin—his cherished keepsake—the size of a ha'penny.

Leetah grinned her appreciation of it, though it was but a poor, crooked thing at that. She sat on the floor and hugged her knees in pure happiness over this favour. She crooked her finger for them all to move nearer to see it close. The odd little figure of Muchias²¹ was among them. Scarcely needing to rise at all to walk, like others, he ambled towards her, top heavy, like a newly hatched chick.

Leetah stared—mouth open. The other children squealed in delight—they knew about Muchias²² and his dwarfed legs. Seated on the floor he had not appeared different from companion children of seven and eight summers—standing had revealed his diminutive height. Leetah was intrigued with this one who was a babe, yet not a babe. She clasped him, patted his head, ended by giving him her gift coin. The others looked on in real envy.

Now she would do a dance for him—for him only. She rose to do this dance—in which was much of story—telling of a fledgeling that flew to greatest heights with a pinion spent and broken.

But others, besides Muchias, were to behold that extra-

ordinary "pas seul" of Leetah, the stolen girl. Coming to the dining hall, hunger keen from the outdoor air of dog racing, were the factor, Lord Southam, his two henchmen and Jack Prudham, new factor of Lac la Biche.

From the hall doorway—over the throng of heads and dancing couples they saw an amazing sight—the dancing figure of a beautiful young girl. Head thrown back, ruby coloured skirt flung high over one arm, she was an enchanting sight. A bare knee twinkled above a high boot top as she stamped about in a circle—now trailing a foot, and then an arm, in the manner of that invincible bird in his strivings toward flight. At one hitching twist of her body a gleaming fair shoulder was brought to view from the over-wide neckline of her gown. It brought a quick frown to the performer's face, but upon seeing the amusement it afforded her juvenile audience, she decided to laugh, instead, at this big joke upon herself.

Over by the doorway, without even moving his eyes, Jack saw those sophisticated, not so young servants of his lordship nudge one another slyly—saw, too, the slightly bulging eyes of Southam blink fast as he straightened his fine cravat. The cultivated, high pitched monotone, addressed to the factor on the subject of horses, was abruptly stilled. Always he spoke of horses! Did the man know nothing else? In appraising a fine filly in the horse guard that day his eyes had bulged and blinked the same way, but that gesture towards his cravat—was added—new.

Jack never hated men so much in all his life.

This whole thing had come upon him suddenly, and as forcibly as a blow. It was benumbing. He felt a curious detachment, as of being remote from the scene, yet he could see, he could hear, acutely. His senses were keenly alive. A moment ago, while having their whiskey in the factor's room downstairs, he had learned of this stolen girl the priest had discovered. By all the gods! And this was the girl—lovely, fair—and *his*—formally committed to his charge—to restore

to her people—for whom he must submit in payment, one horse, two blankets and a gun!

A sense of possessiveness akin to ferocity came over him at seeing her now, and with it was protectiveness too.

At Jack's elbow the genial host was looking about the room to catch the eye of his wife. Marcia, he was thinking, had had a hand in this. What lengths the woman went to, to create diversion in her isolated existence! That awkward girl, brought to him in the forenoon, had been quite transformed by her clever hand. Was that the girl whose cold peaked face had peered at him from enshrouding blankets like that of a frightened rabbit?

Now he wanted to let Marcia know, with an approving look and smile, how thoroughly he appreciated this little novelty she had perpetrated—entertaining to his lordship too — — —.

In some artless and undefined way the girl had brought the musicians to her own pulsating measure. The other dancers, too, were following. Onlookers were held by the enlivening sight. They saw Jack Prudham do an unaccountable thing. With quick, determined strides, he walked directly across the room to the dancing Leetah, grasped her in his arms, and whirled her away with him in the English manner of dancing.

The musicians almost stopped playing in a chortling surprise. Leetah was completely taken off her feet—but there was no denying the vigour of that grip upon her. She gasped at the hurt of those arms. Her captor, she saw, was not only lithe and strong, but personable and handsome too. Some of her fright gave way to curiosity. She continued to dance, following her partner's step, waited and watched his face warily. His face was strangely set and stern.

Jack could not speak. He was intoxicated by the feel of her soft form surging with an uneven panting breath against him. He could smell the sweet scent of poplar smoke in her hair—soft brown hair of a white girl raised in a tepee. All in life that was good, sweet and satisfying, was now within

his arms. He must not let go. She must understand this—he must make her know—tell her.

He tried.

"They call you Leetah?"

"Oui—Leetah."

"And your other name—that of your father?"

Leetah was puzzled. She hesitated. "Je ne sais pas—in Ingleez," she faltered, "ah-da-na-know."

"Ah! I see. Very well then, 'Leetah je ne sais pas,' I will give you a name that you may always know. It is my own—'Prudham.' Say it, Leetah!"

"Proo-o-tum," drew out the girl, obediently.

Jack's gaze upon her became even more intent and serious.

"I will try to find your father and your mother. Tomorrow we shall journey to Lac la Biche. We will be married at once—tonight—parson or priest, it matters not—and thereafter you will always live with me in my house, Leetah."

Leetah's eyes dilated, but never wavered from his steadfast gaze.

Jack's voice took on a troubled, almost anguished tone.

"Answer—Leetah! Say words—any words! Do you not understand me? Do you—do you—consent?"

The music stopped abruptly. The fiddler had broken a string. There were raucous laughs and impatient shouts all around them.

Reluctantly Jack released his partner. She stood free, but their eyes still held. Leetah's lips were parted in wonderment. But Leetah, somehow, did understand. She was still a little frightened and quite overwhelmed by the sudden ardour of the strange young man. She saw the strain, the fearful tenseness in the face of her would-be lover—perhaps felt a little pity for him so. Her own eyes calmed, they became woman-wise. Then the corners of her lips twitched slightly and she again resorted to drollery. Lifting high her hands, she touched Jack's temples lightly with her fingertips, trailed them down slowly over his bearded cheeks—down, down,

along the sides of his throat, until they met and came to rest upon his breast. A teasing, provocative gesture. The man's jaws tightened—his eyes darkened under that strange caress which was at once a question and an answer.

The fiddle started to play, the dancing began. Jack reached out to gather the girl close to his pounding heart—his hungering body.

* * * * *

Elizabeth and her husband were in their own room on the third floor. Sounds of the dancing below came up to them.

"I thought if we said our 'good-nights' they might think of stopping." Elizabeth's hand followed the heavy gold watch chain down her black bodice to a timepiece at her belt. She brought it out and sprang it open.

"Why, it's nearly midnight²³—must they go on with it forever?" Her voice was querulous and cross.

Her husband placed the single grease candle he was holding on a chest of drawers, without answering. It was cold in the room, it being warmed only from the room heat below. A large tree-pole bedstead with deep blanket covering stood in a dim corner of the room. With that, the washstand and a chair before a bearskin rug, the room was completely furnished. Real luxury compared to some of the tent living the McDougalls had known since their coming to the Saskatchewan district the summer before.

"All this drinking to health," went on Elizabeth. "A mere excuse!"

"I know." George, too, was weary from his long, arduous day.

A moment or two of silence followed. Elizabeth walked to the dormer window.

"Northern Lights! Oh, George, do come and see!"

He came and looked over her shoulder.

"A new year brought in with such heavenly light—angels showing mere mortals the draperies of heaven! Let us hope . . ."

"Maybe the aurora borealis is a good sign," interposed Elizabeth.

"Indians believe it to be the dancing of departed spirits." Then he added with more direct interest: "Why did you tell young Borgereau you had put prussic acid in water for him? . . . to frighten him?"

"I . . . tell Borgereau—*prussic acid*?" Elizabeth was aghast. "Surely you . . ."

"My dear, I merely asked—don't take it so seriously."

"But, George! You certainly don't think I'd say—much less do —!"

"Don't upset yourself needlessly. I was merely wondering how that tale about poison got started."

"Tale—about poison!" Elizabeth choked.

The parson turned quickly to his wife and patted her shoulder comfortingly.

"Now, now, Betty. Don't take on so." Over her head, on the dresser near by the candle, he spied an opened package that had an apothecary's label. On it was printed plainly "*Boracic Acid*." *Bor-acic . . . ber-acic . . . per-acic . . . per-uhsic*, ah! exactly as Henry had said it!" The minister's charming smile broke between his bearded lips—the merry dark eyes twinkled. "Wife of mine, learn to laugh at those Indian people. They are children—just children!"

Suddenly there came, strong and clear, the sound of Fraser's skirling bagpipes from the balcony below. It was a lordly sound.

"He's playing in the New Year—happiness to you!" They clasped hands and kissed.

"Listen! They're singing our hymn, 'Jesus Loves Me'."

Impetuously Elizabeth grasped George's hand and led downstairs to join the party again. They found the Indian people singing lustily—their "regales" had told. Some were holding

books before them which had the words of their songs written in Cree syllabics.²⁴ Granny Saskatchewan was singing too—still squatted on the floor, rocking herself back and forth, keening high. Her eerie overtones lent a weird beauty to the hymn singing. Now and again the skirling pipes intruded upon the singing too.

Outside, on the balcony, Fraser's fingers were nipping from cold, but he was so intent upon rendering the pentatonic intricacies of "Lady Ramsay's Strathspey" that he scarcely noticed. The balcony made an admirable promenade deck, running the full length of the big house, an excellent platform for the piper's marching. The Scot's heavy boots went clumping and pounding up and down, up and down, along the balcony floor. The last drink his host had given him, was taken neat—he felt the goodness of life; and above him the sky was aglow with the fire and brilliance of the northern lights. They positively crackled as they sped across the northern firmament, like so many dancing dervishes. From this elevated view he could see, beyond the palisades, the endless miles of drifted snows stretching out into the quiet, lonely night. Hard by, though, were these big lighted windows of the house filled with voicings and gaiety. Thank God, he wasn't alone this New Year's Eve, as he once was, wintering at Jasper's house in the Miette Valley. There, he had in his desperate loneliness played to his own dancing shadow on the wall—his only companion at the midnight hour.

He paused at the north end of the balcony and looked out towards Jasper's trail that went west to the mountains. Soon he would take that trail to nearby Ste. Anne. There was something that moved on the trail. A buffalo? A deer? No. He put down his pipes and the sagging bag wailed dismally as it slowly collapsed. The thing had vanished. It had been but a figment of his brain. Then, suddenly, it came in view again on a curving height of land. A dog train!—a burrowing, swiftly-moving thing coming towards the fort. Someone from the Jasper post? Perhaps old Jasper Hawes²⁵

himself? Fraser brought his pipes up and fairly blasted his cheeks to play loud enough for all to know of this coming.

Elizabeth said to Marcia: "It's a good thing that he's not playing that inside this room." Then she added hastily to amend her impolite words: "But I love the bagpipes. Really an outdoor instrument, don't you think?"

The company in the great room had dwindled. Children had gone. A number of dancing couples remained. Elizabeth still held her husband's arm—she pressed it. "The Prudham couple have gone, too, I see. I'm so glad *you* married them, George. I'm sure they will be a happy couple. The young groom seemed to be so in earnest—and I did not mind," she added virtuously, "that you kissed his lovely girl bride, too, George."

George glanced at his wife's sober countenance and his eyes again became merry with humour.

"Mr. Prudham told me she was to continue her study of English and French with the nuns at the northern mission, and he's bought all the lovely woollen goods in the trading store so that she can always wear fine dresses like the one Marcia gave her. She is to learn to sew, too."

"M-m-m," said George, scarcely interested.

"Her dear young man doesn't even know that that dress is very *passé*—with those long, loose, open sleeves—they haven't worn them like that for twenty years." Elizabeth glanced down at her own modish tight sleeves, that were full only at the top.

"But could that lovely gown worn with that girl's grace really be out of style?" asked George, wonderingly.

The fiddler began tuning his strings. "Dear heaven!" said Elizabeth, "are they going to start their dancing again?"

Just then the door opened from the hallway and another couple entered from without. The woman had a papoose on her back. A little gasp escaped Elizabeth. It was Jeanette, somewhat wan from her recent effort in nature's behalf, but seemingly happy and well. In her eyes was the rapt look of

new motherhood. Close beside was Henri, fairly beaming with pride.

"Why, he's handsome!" said Elizabeth.

"You begin to see them," answered her husband.

The wedding service was to be performed without delay. Marcia and Elizabeth took the baby and made little motherly sounds of rapture over the new-born one. They beheld its tiny brown chubbiness and adored.

Then came the christening of the child. "And what is to be the name of this fine infant son of yours?" asked Reverend McDougall.

"Jeanette's baby should be called Jean," said Henri stoutly.

"Yes. Right—quite right," agreed the parson.

"But, Henri, why not *your* name too? A second name—'John Henry,'" asked Elizabeth, her interest now thoroughly aroused.

Henri's pleased smile flashed towards his would-be poisoner. "Ah! Yeas. 'Jan-Ohnray.' A good name. That iss fine."

And so the child was christened, in the sight of God, and with Elizabeth as its "Marianne," or godmother.

The factor brought wine to drink to the health of the happy couple, their new-born son, ". . . and to the New Year," he cried, raising his glass. Elizabeth, now in rare good humour, recklessly raised a glass, too, but seeing the look of disapproval on her husband's countenance, his resolute shake of head at a proffered drink, she rather shamefacedly put the glass on the table again, without even touching it to her lips.

All remained gay and merry in mood. The room was pleasantly warmed from the big all-day fires in the fireplace. A ruddy glow was upon their faces. In this cheerful place all were inclined to linger. Even Elizabeth was now loath to leave. "How pleasant and agreeable this is," thought Elizabeth, "just chatting near the fire—no dancing, no noise."

Presently they all heard a sound at the doorway as of an animal scratching. Heads turned from the fire in curiosity. Louis, the fiddler, opened the door. They saw a gaunt,

blanketed figure standing there, holding out a small bundle before him. Everyone stared, without moving. Then, "Good God!" exclaimed the factor, "Paka!" And he hurried to the doorway, though before he reached there the tall figure crumpled and collapsed on the floor. Someone grasped the outstretched bundle as he fell. They ran to him, partly lifted, partly dragged the exhausted old Indian to the fire.

"Quick! Fetch rum—hot water!" They made place for him by the fire and tried in many ways to help. The bundle had somehow found its way to the arms of Granny Saskatchewan. Marcia and Elizabeth went over to her and watched the old woman unwind its wrappings of rabbit fur skins. The bundle became smaller and smaller. There appeared a little black thatch of hair above a pinched, dull green face. Both women drew nearer, fascinated. A low exclamation of horror came from Elizabeth—that face was still, so very, very fixed and still. All the while Granny was gabbling and mumbling to herself. She fussed and busied her bird-claw hands. Then she began to suck noisily on her finger. It was played delicately across the infant's mouth. A faint spasmodic tremor went over its tiny jaws.

"It's alive!—it lives!" cried Elizabeth wildly, as she turned about to the others. "Oh! Do somebody come! We must do something at once! We need milk—we should have warm milk!" And involuntarily her eyes flew towards Henri, the milker.

The whites of Henri's eyes showed anxiously—he became almost inarticulate. He gestured towards Jeanette. "My bride—Jeanette!" he stammered. "She have much."

So they wrested the mite with its spark of life from the old crone's grasp and gave it to Henri's bride, who took it with grave tenderness to her breast.

With all thoughts of dignity forgotten, Elizabeth knelt on the floor and watched the little puny throat stretch in an effort of long, hard swallows. She realized that tears were on her cheeks. Marcia gave a little squeal of joy as the infant

began to suckle, then Elizabeth, too, found herself laughing, shakily.

Presently George's tall form loomed above her and in his face was real concern. She felt herself being raised and then firmly propelled towards the stairs and up.

"Go to bed, Elizabeth," she heard him say. "You need to rest yourself."

They sent Marcia away too, and the others were leaving—for Paka was dying. In vain they ministered to him—gave him brandy and rubbed his cold and lifeless limbs. They would not warm. Paka had made his last journey; had found his last trail. He lay on his back and stared above with eyes bright and feverish. His head moved from side to side, and his voice came strange and hollow. Granny had crept close to where he lay. The baby was once more in her arms, she rocked it and crooned to it soothingly, but she could hear Paka. It was, in fact, as though he were speaking to her. Only the factor, the parson and Alexis now remained. They had thought of sending Granny away, too, but the factor demurred—the dying man had no next of kin.

Paka's mind remained clear, though he was sinking fast. He struggled to tell them of the misfortune that had happened at Jasper's house.

Wannah was lost. She had been stricken with some strange malady after the birth of her girl baby, nine weeks ago. She had not taken her baby on her back as an Indian mother should, and wandered constantly. She roamed up the Miette Valley. Twice they had found her far up the mountain where she had gone, she said, to reach those rocks that were warm and red with colour. She shivered with an ague and could not sleep. The baby was starving. He had fed it with milk²⁶ of their mare. But the mare's milk became scanty and she kicked him and her colt viciously, whenever they came near. With Wannah, the mother, again missing, and the disconsolate father gone in search of her, he had wrapped the baby, put the last of the milk in a buffalo cow's bladder and come

thither. The mother, he knew, would not be found alive with the storms and snows that had come in the past week—besides, he had seen death on her face for some time.

The dying man moaned feebly and shut his eyes. The parson knelt down and raised his head, tried to make him more comfortable. They poured whiskey down his throat. That revived him somewhat. He was able to continue his tale.

No, he suffered no pain. It was only that he was so very weary—could no longer rise and walk. The dogs—his trusty dogs—had brought him down the trail to safety. They had kept on the run day and night with very little food and rest. He groaned again aching. Alexis knelt down. He saw the fast glazing eyes.

"I will fetch the priest, Paka," whispered Alexis comfortingly. The priest, Alexis knew, was in his little chapel nearby, holding a midnight mass. So Alexis left to bring him.

Paka's stare became suddenly fixed upon the parson—he muttered incoherently. "The priest! The parson! But their preaching was not like—not at one." For him was the Keechi Manitou—the One Great Spirit over all. Wannah, too, should have followed their Great One—always she was sorely troubled whether to worship as her father, Maskepetoon, or as her husband, de Berriot, a Catholic.²⁷

The factor rekindled the fire, had a thought of the cold of out of doors. Soon there must be a grave dug for Paka, on the slope down by the river, where was burying ground. He must tell the men to dig only a shallow one. The ground would be too hard with frost to dig deep. He looked down at Paka's great bony body—he would need a big grave. Paka was one of the few remaining full-blood Indians in the fort—a good Indian—and now he was going—the genial Company official felt saddened. Already the old Indian woman was making her mourning noise.

Then the priest arrived, with Alexis following. Father Lacombe's eyes were deep with pity. "Jesu Saviour, ayez pitié du pauvre sauvage," he murmured.

Granny crawled towards him and tugged at his mantle. She wanted him to see her baby—Wannah's baby that Paka had brought her. She implored him to notice the child—to bless it. She spoke beggingly in words of her own tongue—he must christen this “princess” child.

The priest admonished her to wait. His duty now was with the dying one. He smiled tenderly down at an old guide and friend of the trails. Paka saw the beloved face bending over him and would give his final confession of sins. The priest made the sign of the cross and showing the dying Indian the Blessed Sacrament, prayed: “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.”

Paka's confession revealed a long life of excruciating hardship. There was one promise he had left unfulfilled—a promise given in youth while fleeing from captivity. He had promised to return to the Blackfoot country, bringing the riches of the North—copper and gold in abundance. He had failed in this, as no one would follow him on the long journey there—only his mother, whom he must espouse,²⁸ and the way was too long and too far for her aging limbs. She had been stricken with illness and overcome with an agony of pain. She had begged him to kill²⁹ her. This he had done, striking her with his hatchet—in great sorrow. He touched old scars upon his arm—self-inflicted—done in his contrition.

“... Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo”—the priest murmured on, sprinkling the holy water.

They saw Paka stretch his parched throat yearningly towards the healing water. Rasping sounds came from his outstretched mouth. The old woman beside him continued her long-drawn wails of a tortured animal.

True to his word, the priest baptized the infant girl baby. They named her Wannah Miette, after the mother and the valley in which she had perished.

And only the old Indian woman, “Sissis” of the river, knew that in saving this life of a grandchild of a great chieftain, Paka had rescued flesh of his own flesh and blood of his blood.



Chapter Four

Indian Girls in a Mission Church

THE river was cloudy from heavy June rains. Fish would not bite with the river running so thick with clay, Miette knew. The girl knelt down on the wet shore of the river and leaned over far until she could see her form reflected darkly in the gray-green water below. It was the form of a maid of ten, clad in the long shapeless cotton garb that is habitually worn by the children of the Metis.

A little frown of anxiety was on Miette's face. From nearby came the sound of children's voices—the fretful bleating and cooing noises that come from children as yet too young for speech. It came from several; a few toddling ones, babies who could creep and a tiny one in a cradle board that hung from a tree branch. They were sprawled about upon a blanket that was spread beneath a sheltering embankment of the river. These were Miette's charges, though their little cries were not the cause of her ruffled mood. She scarcely noticed when one lusty infant, creeping beyond the blanket area, reached where she knelt and laid a sopping mouth against her bare heels. She was troubled because it was already noon and only two smallish fish hung from her line on the bushes behind. At this time, usually, she had it hanging full with her catch and some in the basket too. Then Mama Borgereau would come to take the fish that were on the line and she could take those in the basket for barter and sale.

She pushed back on the adventurous one at her heels, raking its warm little body with her foot affectionately. Miette was fond of these babies she cared for.

By and by their mothers, Blanche, Yetta, Lucy, Jeanette, all who dwelt in the Mill Creek Indian settlement hardby, would come for them, but most of the day they would remain under Miette's watchful eye. Here they mewed and milled about on the blanket, sleeping ones curled together closely, while the others tried vainly to claim Miette's attention with vigorous wailings. Often this brought a mother down to the river bank crèche, who would mumble and chide the girl for some fancied neglect. Why had Miette not put fresh moss in the wrappings of her young one? To which Miette would offer no reply, but stare stonily ahead with her great black eyes as though she hadn't heard. It was her best and only defence. Besides, some of the babies were too often dirty—their mothers who suckled them ate only berries—berries, too lazy to fish or to make a catch of game. Thinking this, the girl's mouth would become hard and drawn, and looking at

her then, one would think her an altogether brash one. Though in that one would be wrong, for Miette was sensitive, but she had to fend for herself somehow—always she did her utmost in caring for the babies and trying to get fish for food.

Strangely, the babies never ventured far from her, nor did they go into the water by themselves. Sometimes she actually pushed the bigger ones in and watched their frantic splashings in delighted excitement. Miette herself was not afraid of the river. She knew how to swim—had learned at an early age, too. But she couldn't swim as well as Muchias, who swam the river when it was as high as it was now. Sometimes he would swim over to the south bank and fish with her. She wished he would come again and help her catch some now. She needed better ways and means than just her baited fish lines. One time they had both swum the river a distance and headed a school of fish to the mouth of the creek, when she had caught several gold-eyes right in her apron. It had been great sport. As long as she could remember Muchias had befriended her. He had meant real protection after Granny Saskatchewan died. Before that she always had Granny—with her big warm enveloping shawl, under which one ducked at times like a frightened chick going beneath its hen mother's wing. They lived in the fort then, too.

Miette remembered vividly that morning when she woke up in their lodge and found Granny cold and stiff as wood beside her. They couldn't waken her any more. Then they buried her in the graveyard below the hill near the landing place for the boats. Whenever Miette took her fish to the fort people now, she went to see Granny's grave place. Hers was the only one that had a little grave-house upon it. She would get on her hands and knees as she was now, and crawl inside—see that shawl, now dark and dirty from the weathering of two winters. It was tacked to the ceiling of the little house and there was that purple satin bodice, too, which the factor's wife had given Granny, with its lace and gold trimmings, hanging tattered and torn. But the most interesting of

Granny's keepsakes in there was the pearly pink shell ornament she had always worn. Miette like to touch it and set it swinging like a pendulum where it dangled on a string of babiche. Then she would feel her own shell ornament that was warm against her throat. The two were as like as a pair of moccasins. From Granny she had heard the old legend concerning those betrothal shells. They cast a spell upon their possessor. The little pearl-like half shells must be reunited or else love would go forever unrequited. Thinking of this and many other remembered tales, she would come out of the grave house with her eyes wide and shining as though she had been in some distant spirit world of her own. Indeed, that she had.

The noon sun was beginning to feel hot on her shoulders. She turned and dragged the child who was at her heels back to the group on the blanket. All the babies were then fondled and patted in turn, in the way she had often seen Granny do. Next time she went to the grave house she would make the shell piece swing harder than ever. It was really like Granny rocking back and forth on her haunches, laughing hard at some of her childish capers.

Once she had asked how she came by the shell piece that hung about her own neck.

"Granny Saskatchewan stole it from an old dead Indian," Mama Jeanette had answered. "Steal! Steal! She did, like all Indians do who never go to the church-school, or confession either." Her glance was dark and meaningful.

Miette knew why Mama Borgereau had looked at her like that. They could not persuade her to go and stay with the nuns at the St. Albert Mission Post when the family had moved away from the fort. Nearly all the people had gone, and they even moved the little chapel away. Only Muchias could stay, because he carried the wood and water for the factor's household. They were going to tear down the big Okemaw house and build another finer one beside the palisades. It was all so changed since Miette had lived there

and the time before the great sickness.¹ Papa Henri said it was good they had moved away when they did or they would all have died of the big sickness too. They had travelled far to the North and lived in the bushes. Almost every night they had camped at a new river or stream. It had been freezing cold in the winter travelling on the snows, but none of them had got the sickness. She was glad when she saw Muchias was still there when they finally came back to settle on the Mill Creek flat on the Saskatchewan. But he had the marks of the sickness² on his face and arms. He was really old enough now to be a man, but seemed like her own age because he did not grow tall. Like herself he used to help Granny with the babies and the fishing, as Lena helped her now. Lena was the second of the Borgereau family of eight, and was nine. There was Natale, too, who came next, she was six. She wished they would come so she could look at her fish lines again. These were suspended from willow gaffs skilfully affixed to trees. Her bare feet smacked over the saturated clay of the delta at the mouth of the creek where it entered the river.

"Lena! Natale!" she shouted up the creek ravine, and presently the girls came tripping down the paths from the shack houses above. "A boat comes," Natale cried, as they came nearer—"a little one." She was eager about it—the boats meant something to the river children.

Lena was like all the other Borgereau brood, big-boned, broad faced, with healthy colour and thick black hair. Natale was different, small, narrow of face, with frowning black brows. She jumped up and down in a kind of excitement.

Miette cautioned Lena to watch the children so she could leave. As she went back to the shoreline she saw the boat coming—Natale was right—there were two men in it, and as it came closer she saw that one of them was Muchias. He was rowing strongly. He had strong shoulders for rowing. Miette came to her lines and saw that all were sagging and loose but one, which was pulled taut, bending the willow branch to which it was tied nearly to the water's surface. The

girl's eyes gleamed, she ran her fingers lightly down the string but did not disturb it until she had carefully raised the branch upright. Then swiftly she drew in her prize. It was a huge sturgeon. She was astounded. Never before had she caught one like that at this place. Sometimes they got one below the fort. The foolish thing must have lost it way in the muddied water. The girl's thin arms strained at holding up the fish that flopped convulsively at the end of the string. Expertly she struck it a strong blow with a stick—the thing made one more flip with its tail and then relaxed. "A fine big fish, good for more than a dozen little ones."

Miette was happier at once—and a boat was coming too! She pulled the fish back to where the babies were and allowed them to crow over it and strike it gleefully with their little outstretched fists. She could hear the boat now. It was rounding the bend of the river. The skiff headed straight towards them, where lay an old derelict boat. It had lain there, unused and useless, its bottom broken and gaping, for years. Ordinarily it was high and dry on the bank, but today one end was lapped by high water.

Natale followed her to where the men disembarked. The men moved with quick intentness and purpose. They broke dead branches from the underbrush and built a fire beneath the old boat. The smoke made a nice homey smell. The little girls sniffed the air and came closer. The boat was burning now—it made some heat. "Why did the men make a fire with the sun so warm?" Then they saw. The taller man with Muchias would rake out the white hot nails from below the charred boat. He put each on a neat pile on a large stone. When there was a crooked one he held it down firmly with his iron tongs and banged it straight with the blunt edge of his axe. Muchias kept adding more fuel to the fire. The boat was burning right down towards the lower end that was in the river. The bigger man drove his axe into the old derelict's ribs and knocked the frame to pieces to speed its demolition. The pile of nails on top the stone got higher and higher.

" 'Tis the last of an old boat thot's made mony a thrip down the river to York," said the workman, whom Muchias called 'Walt.' John Walter was a strongly built young Orkney man, scarcely twenty, who had just finished his first year³ with the Company. Muchias grunted in answer and pointed with his knife to a seat board that was upended and showed in carved lettering the initials: "J.P.P.—'52."

On a sudden impulse Walter took his axe and struck the board hard to withdraw it from the flames. Afterwards, he looked a little sheepishly at the piece of board at his feet, still aflame, and removed a nail from one end. There were more letters—"J. T. Grant" was spelled in more elaborate lettering than the other. They all came closer to look, and Muchias scraped embedded clay from a smaller word below. "St-r-o-m-ness" spelled out Walter, "Stromness"—his own home in the Orkneys! Someone by name of Grant who had made the trip nearly twenty years ago, had come from Stromness. He felt suddenly that his home was nearer. Muchias pointed to the initials "J.P.P." at the top. "Prudham—Lac la Biche," he said shortly.

"Did ye ken the other?"

Muchias shook his head. He hadn't known the man called Grant.

Walter's mind went back to his own trip from York, the long tedious hours they had spent in a boat coming to Fort Edmonton the summer previous.

"The poor divils must hae been verra wearied o' idleness to be doing such a nuisance on a good boat wood," observed Walter dryly, but he had been stirred to nostalgic memories. Would it ever be the same as home here? If he had a house of his own and settled along the river bank? His eye travelled over the undulating treed banks around him. He would stake a claim and build a fine house that would be close to the water's edge and then he need not climb down a steep hill for water as they did at the fort. The soil was rich, he could have a fine garden. His family should come out, too—his sister, a

brawny lass—who would like the life here. Settlers were coming from everywhere now that the country had become Canadian territory. He decided to stake a claim. There would be wood in plenty on this south bank. No use cutting for the building until he was ready to build. The Indians—the breeds—would only take them. He did not want the bitter experience that the Reverend George McDougall had had with the logs he had readied for the kirk.

The boat was burning more slowly as the fire approached the end sloping into the river. John Walter became impatient. "Muchias," he cried, "ye needn't wait, ye'd better take the nails across, the builders may hae need of them." He decided to wait alone for the remainder of the burning boat to yield its nails, and take a walk about and choose a site for his home-*stead*. Muchias could row back for him.

They heaped quantities of dry brush on the fire. Still, Walter thought, it would be some time before the boat was all burned. Right now the flames were playing around the printed letters on the keel, "H.B.C." He certainly wasn't going to rescue *those*. Whatever his feelings were towards the Company which employed him, they were decidedly not mixed with sentiment. "H.B.C." the men in their moments of ribaldry would say stood for "Here Before Christ," or "Half Breed Company," but the best yet was when "Mac," their fat cook, irate over being dog bitten, called it the "Hell's Bitches' Company." Well, the half-breeds were becoming less in number at the fort and their too numerous dogs went with them.

They gathered up the nails—still warm to the touch—put them in a leather bucket. Muchias carried it towards the skiff. He motioned for the little girls on the bank to come. Walter saw that the older girl had a splendid big fish in her basket. It was so big the basket could scarcely contain it. Muchias took her fish and the nails, while the children followed him, taking a few steps in shallow water to the skiff.

Miette caught up the tail of her skirt between her legs, but Natale, unmindful, allowed her dress to drag in the water.

The dwarf grasped the side of the boat and lunged aboard with huge strength, like a jumping toad. The little girls climbed in after the rocking of the skiff subsided. Walter untied the landing rope—it was pulled up and the boat's prow was turned upstream towards the settlement across. A brisk wind had risen. The boat danced over the sunlit water merrily. Miette could feel it charging strongly with each stroke of the oars. It made her quite elated. Her slender arms clenched about her knees, she breathed in the fresh summer air in real content. Below squatted Natale beside the basket. The fish's tail made a spirited backward arc from the rim, a handsome thing. She could smell it, too. She felt proud about catching it. The man Walter had said: "Ye'ar nae mair lang than what ye've caught."

Now Natale was making ugly faces. She looked a little green.

"Natale! What ails you?"

"Le poisson! Faugh! So nee-ar!" she complained.

The other two burst out laughing. "Nev'mind," Muchias soothed, "We land now—soon."

Reaching the opposite bank they walked single file up the hill road—Muchias carrying the nails, Miette her fish basket, with Natale following behind, her wet skirt hem sticking to her calves.

As they climbed the steep and narrow trail, Miette essayed a few gasping sentences in conversation. She tried to tell Muchias that she should get more for this fish than for her usual mess.

The effort was too great. She gave up. It was even harder for Muchias with his short legs and top heavy body. He wheezed and grunted all the way until they reached the top. The trail followed the rim of the cliff. Pretty soon they could hear the lively sounds of hammering. Muchias pointed to where the church building could be seen farther west. It was limned clearly against the bright blue sky—newly sawn lumber glistening from afar.

The sight gave the dwarfed one new impetus. Soon he outdistanced his companions. But now Miette's footsteps lagged. She was timid. She dreaded going near where strange people, white people, would be. She grasped Natale's hand and like little shy animals they edged close. Natale even whimpered a little.

"Tais! Tais-toi!" Miette snarled in an undertone. She was angry at her for making noises now. Of course she was afraid too—all her people were in awe of the white people—the new settlers—they only pretended not to be. Papa Henri told that he had said to one looking for a claim: "Go to hell and find it!" But she knew he was boasting—merely boasting.

There was a house nearby the church building where the minister's people lived, and beyond it a little growth of brush. Miette and Natale sidled cautiously about these bushes and felt safer—out of sight.

About the church all were busily working. The men gathered about Muchias at once for the nails they wanted.

In the shade, on the east side of the building, a tall lady in a grey dress was spreading a white cloth⁴ on the grass. She and two young women went to and from the house, each time laden with some food for the repast—roast fowl, potatoes, turnips, berry pies. They placed the heavier bowls at the ends of the cloth to prevent the wind billowing it and blowing it away. Over all the place was the hurry and excitement of a building 'bee.' Voices were pitched higher with the eagerness of doing a task. There were incessant calls and answers, jesting and laughter. It was a lively scene—and no one felt this quickening more than the Reverend George McDougall himself. Their church, on his own claim—John's next—and a good sheltering house nearby for the family. How they were blessed! He hammered with a will those used square nails from the old York boats, becoming less and less needed, what with the long cart trains⁵ now coming oftener.

He had worked from dawn to dark since they had begun the new mission⁶ building here at Edmonton, yet he was never

overweary. They had passed their darkest days, he and Elizabeth, the winter before, when the pestilence had struck their home. He tried to tear from his memory those three graves⁷ they had left in their garden at Victoria. Their two lovely daughters and John's wife, too—God rest their souls! During those tragic days of last year he had known his first and only regrets at ever having brought his family to the West. It was good that they were starting here anew with strenuous and absorbing duties to do. After the church there must follow a school house. Already the settlement was going to be incorporated as a village.⁸ There would follow the need of making municipal laws for peace and order, to replace fighting, drinking and plundering. Some day there would be a railway built right up to the village—of that he felt certain. Surveyors had already come from St. Boniface. Hopes were high.

McDougall, a strongly-built man of fifty, vaulted the four feet to the ground from where he stood with the agility of a youth. He whistled and sang. What a colossal view the site offered! Across the river the terraced banks of trees in their fresh green of spring were like a great park.

Suddenly he called aloud: "Libby! Nellie! You girls should be playing for us while we work."

Others of the party heard him—some shy, overgrown lads fresh from the Orkneys.⁹ They cheered the idea.

'Libby,' who was 'little Elizabeth,' looked questioningly at her mother. When she saw her mother's nod of assent her dark eyes danced with pleasure. She was to be relieved from further tasks in preparing the picnic meal. She was already quite proficient at playing the instrument—the little organ in their parsonage. She had studied music at a young ladies' seminary at Hamilton. She went directly to the front door of the parsonage and purposely left it opened wide. Then she raised the lid of the melodeon.¹⁰ It was all the more dear to her because of its 'littleness.' She adored it!

Her fingers glided gently and with sure touch over the keyboard. She tilted her head up like a bird about to sing. The air was filled with the fluty reed tones of the organ and Libby's song:

"Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of lo-ove;
Let me more of their beauty see,
Wonderful words of life.

The chorus swelled with the lusty voices from without:

"Beau-ti-ful words!
Wonder-ful words!
Wonderful words
Of lo—ove — — — — lo-o-ove — — —,

Verse after verse, hymn after hymn they sang, as they worked, sawed, fashioned and hammered, while their voices rose to Heaven in honest praise of the Lord. Thus the little wooden church of the Wesleyans was built—high on the banks of the winding Saskatchewan; and was fittingly consecrated to God.

* * * * *

Miette and Natale, having safely by-passed the scene of the building bee, reached the factor's great log residence that stood in the centre of the palisaded fort beyond. What Miette must do now was going to tax her highest courage. In anticipation her mouth set, her eyes became fixed, and she walked fast—stern determination in each step. To knock boldly at the door of the house for admittance was out of the question. They circled it once and then darted furtively in the door of the woodhouse at the rear.

Here Natale was instructed to await her return. Afterwards they'd go back to Muchias and the boat, together. There was

nothing—*nothing*—to be afraid of. Only she must be quiet and wait.

Natale promised to keep still. She curled herself up between piles of firewood, covered herself completely with her head shawl, and was asleep almost at once. Miette betook herself off, scrambling over the piled-up firewood, while holding up the burdensome basket. She reached a door that led into the kitchen yard. Here she skirted the chicken run and came closer to the house. She peered about anxiously. No dogs. They had gone with the men. It was lucky. Had some been there, they would in all likelihood have captured her fish.

The next step was taken in panicky haste. She scuttled across the intervening space to a back window and cowered below it. Then slowly she raised herself to peer in. She could just reach to see through the panes by rising on her toes. She was rewarded by what she saw. Wonderful! Again the factor's baby, a pink and white bit of angelic loveliness, was in there. He was being given food by the tall narrow lady, not his mother.

Miette lowered from view—better to assimilate—and then rose again to feast upon the ravishing sight. She did this again and again. It was her tried method—a good one—for gaining entrance to the house. Presently big fat 'Mac' the cook, a good-natured though gruff sort, would bawl out irritably: "Hey, girl! wha'-d'-ya want?"

The door would be flung open.

"What the divil are ya up to, anyway? Come along inside, ya brat!"

Whereupon she would rush inside ere the door closed again.

Then she would stand there inside the big kitchen room, a little breathless but satisfied with the progress made. No heed would be taken of her for a while, but eventually what she had in her basket would be appraised and then she would be rewarded with a money piece.

This time she hadn't long to wait.

"Whee-ew! Thunderation! *You* caught that? Put it down, girl, it's heavy ——"

Even the slim governess paused to look with a spoon of pap poised midair. "Eoh, I siah! What a tremendjus cray-tchuah!" Arrogance was in more than her speech—it showed in the high arch of her narrow nostrils and forehead.

Miette remained oblivious to their exclamations—she was taking in all that was about her in the spacious kitchen—the floor scrubbed to whiteness; the rows and rows of plates and pots on shelves; plants with bright red flowers on the long table. Compared to the dank squalor of the Borgereau shanty, it appeared palatial. But her eyes would come back to that cherub in its high-chair beside the table. So fair—golden haired like the child Jesus in the arms of the Holy Mother at the chapel. Miette hungered to hold it—feel it against her. For the moment she forgot the reason for her being there—the fish—her coveted catch.

The cook grasped the sturgeon by its tail—tested its weight by lifting it—up and down—up and down. He made a big show of the effort it took. This for the benefit of Miss Fennell, the new governess. "Rather a hoity-toity lady, this one," he thought. "Just out from England and all that, but then ——?"

Miss Fennell went on spooning food to the baby with a little sniff. The bonnie little one reached forward, lips open, to meet each spoonful in grave attention.

Mac trundled heavily over to a shelf where the clock stood. Up there in a cracked pitcher were kept coins to pay for things Indians occasionally brought him for the table. There was only one five cent piece left in it. Deciding this wasn't a fair price, he consulted with Miss Fennell. She agreed to do something about the situation. She nodded in quick comprehension and rose.

Miette became aware of Miss Fennell's step behind her on the stairs that led to upper rooms. "Thud-dud-dud-dud"—she was going up quickly. The idea was born in Miette's mind—to touch the baby—feel it! Noiselessly—lest the cook hear

her, she moved towards the high chair—sliding furtively along the end of the table, all the while keeping her face towards the man to watch lest her movements be observed. If he turned, she would stop dead. Nearer she crept, and nearer—just a few feet more—now only an arm's length —.

The delicate flesh on the chubby arm was so exquisitely soft, Miette's rough and weathered hand scarcely felt the contact.

Then at once a hard bony hand fell on her shoulder and gave her a sharp push. The estimable Miss Fennell had returned. "Just in time," she afterwards told, "to catch that Indian girl in the act of sneaking brazenness!"

With the piece of money pressed in her hand, Miette fled from the room like a wild thing.

The cook chuckled as he closed the door after her. "Funny little thing—that half-breed girl. She comes from the French 'breed' settlement near the grist mill across—lives with the Borgereaus—but isn't their kid —."

"Eoh! Would siah huh mannaahs were rathah mawh than 'funny.'"

" . . . She's a waif they bro't up," went on Mac, ignoring the cool interjection. "They say she was brought here one bitter night in the dead of winter—her mother was lost. An old Indian runner carried her from one of the outlying posts—Jasper, maybe it was —."

. . . "And the child's fautha?" A little asperity crept into the tone. She was thinking: I shouldn't have asked. *He only wants to engage me in conversation. Just another humiliating feature about my position here.* If I had suspected that I would be associating with the kitchen help, spooning food to an infant—*would I have sailed?*

"He never turned up here. He was a brother of Claude de Berriott, at one time a factor here."

"de Berriott?" Miss Fennell felt a quick appreciation for a name she knew ranked high in French aristocracy. She had been employed as the English governess in a family of the

French nobility before she had rashly engaged here. When they had noticed her coughing overmuch and her emaciated figure, they had advised their physician. He had warned her about her lungs. "Mlle. needs ze sunshine," he'd said. "Ze outdoors." Her resignation was intimated. She had no means. In the employment columns of a London daily she'd noticed: "Governess wanted for family of Hudson's Bay Company official in Canada. Must be able to ride." "*Must be able to ride*"—it was the latter that had decided her. She saw herself with the progeny of that employer riding the limitless plains, all day in "*ze sunshine.*" It was upsetting to find upon arrival the factor's wife, a pretty matron, younger than herself, struggling with the management of a large household and her first baby. Youthful and friendly, it was impossible to think of her as a superior. That was upsetting, too, thought Miss Fennell: "no standard."

"Oh yes! Old de Berriott was a real blue blood—of French stock. But none of *them* claimed the girl either—and her mother was the daughter of the big chief who went Methodist ——" went on the cook garrulously.

"Naturally—not!" the interruption was acid in tone. Blue blood mixing with *Indian* women. It was disgusting! Miss Fennell sniffed again and wielded the spoon so much faster the baby couldn't keep up to it.

And finding his audience less and less responsive and attentive the cook went about his business. He thought: "Any man who wants to take that sour bag of bones to bed with him is welcome. As for me—I'd rather ——" he banged a skillet down on the stove.

In Miss Fennell's mind the thought ran that it was a pity *she* hadn't been here at the time to save the de Berriott man from his shameful liaison. She could have any unmarried Company officer in the country now by the mere crook of her finger, of that she felt certain. But fur trapping! No! A man would have to put up a decent building—go in for raising horses and cattle before *she* would consider—what a calamity

a wild Indian girl would be in a family home like a de Berriott's! She tried to picture it. They would probably put it up to the *English* governess to tame her—the French governess would only throw up her hands. There was no denying the girl had a certain distinction of brow and feature. "Good blood," she said to herself, "always tells."

And while Miss Fennell's thoughts rambled along about her thus, Miette was well on her way back to the church and Muchias. She pulled Natale by the hand and still walked fast. Natale, who had been rudely dragged from slumber, stumbled along swinging the basket. When the basket was empty, Natale could carry it. The big money-piece felt warm and hard in Miette's palm. It was the biggest she had yet seen. It would have been better to have been given *two* smaller ones. Then she could have kept one—and no one the wiser. As it was, she must give this to Mama Jeanette. She, in turn, would reluctantly give it to her spouse, who would be only the more drunk some night later, because of it. Even Jean now smelled of the whiskey, sometimes. Jean thought he was a man then. He was big for his age, built like his ancestors, steersmen of the "Nor'westers."

They could see the church from the front side now. Miette wondered why it had no cross upon it. There was a round window high upon the front with panes all rose and green coloured. It was a fine thing; she realized that. Now they were near enough to hear the noise the builders made. It would be nice to see inside, Miette thought. She had gained some courage and confidence from her last venture.

"We will go," she said to Natale, "right to the inside of that nice new building."

"Why?" demanded Natale, disgruntled.

"Because it is a church," answered Miette, "where anyone can go—and we shall go"—she added firmly.

"And will the Reverend Father be there?"

"Of course not, you little foolish! But there will be another," Miette said, "who will not bite."

But still Natale had to be pulled along hard.

None of the builders were inside the building when the two girls climbed up the logs that provided a temporary step to the door.

Inside all was golden with sunshine. The smell and the dust of freshly sawn wood was thick in the air. The afternoon sunlight drenched it and, coming through the round window above, made coloured veils of violet, rose and green that fell to the floor. It was like a rainbow in the sky! Natale forgot her fears and wove her hands upward through a shaft of coloured light and smiled. Miette touched a rectangle of red that lay on the bright new floor. They were enchanted by this new loveliness in a building.

Peeping through chinks of the log wall they saw, without, a feast spread on the ground—heaped up bowls of vegetables, roasted fowl and many pies. “Muchias,” thought Miette, “would partake of this, too. How lucky for him!”

She was thinking how good that food would taste, when sound, new and wonderful, came to her ears. It flowed around her—enveloping her senses. Voices singing followed, but it was the tone that underlay these which held her rooted, spell-bound. It was so piercingly sweet it hurt inside her, deep down. It was the first time either had heard the rich polyphony of a musical instrument played in concordant harmony. They were immeasurably moved. Miette felt she was hearing all the calls of birds and beasts she knew, sounded together at once, then continuing with sustaining power, on and on.

The Metis children stood stock still, facing but not seeing each other, drinking in the sound of the melodeon—listening, listening. For a while they almost ceased to be.

A man espied them as he came in, tools and lumber in his arms. “Well, well!” he laughed. “Our parishioners already assemble!”

The lumber was dropped to the floor with a clatter and the spell was broken.

The tones of the melodeon remained in Miette's mind long after they had gone and were once more crossing the river. It was very odd. Miette had a raisin cake in her hand. Natale, she saw, was munching one. Muchias had given them these, saying simply, "The lady!" It was all very funny. Natale eating so fast and the sun so bright on the water she could scarcely open her eyes to look about. She laughed and laughed—light-headed and giddy from the sun. What would Muchias say when he saw her money? It made her laugh even more to think of it.

Muchias looked soberly at her pretty brown face, so animated with laughter. Why didn't she eat instead of laughing? Her body was too thin and light. She was laughing again—at Natale hanging over the boat side—laughing too much. Did she get enough to eat? She should be at the fort again. He got plenty good food there.

Suddenly she jerked out her hand to him—opened it.

He saw it—an English money piece, a shilling. It amazed him. His look of astonishment made her laugh more.

"You keep it, M'yetta!"

"Non! Non!" she shrilled hysterically.

"You keep something fo' de beeg ketch!" he insisted.

He was thinking, as she had before, of what would happen to it in the hand of Borgereau.

"Tee, hee, hee, hee, HEE ——" Natale had straightened up and both were laughing now.

On a sudden impulse the dwarf took a hand from the oar and reached down into the pocket of his pants. He fumbled a while and brought out a coin—gave it to Miette.

It stopped the hilarity. Then dark heads bent over it. "Oh! Oh! Moo-che-us," cried Miette, a sudden rush of warmth coming over her for him. "You are good—so-o goo-od to me!"

"Nough," grunted Muchias, "no good—no good!" He shook his head.

Miette looked at the copper he'd given her. He was right. It was a beaver coin—no longer money. She compared it with the other she held—silver, with a woman's head—the great Queen Mother's—upon it. The copper one showed two horned stags facing, and a wolf between. The hind quarters of one stag was entirely obliterated—the coin had been defaced, struck as though in scorn of its uselessness. Shame on that one! She tied it tightly in the end of her head-kerchief that was tucked in at her waist. It was safe there, and she wanted to keep it always. It was precious to her, though she neither knew that it once had lain in the splendidly beaded pouch of her grandsire, Chief Maskepetoon, nor that an even older ancestor, who had saved her infant life, had once struck it—only to probe its metal.

On the bank where they landed lay a black pile of charred embers, all that remained of an old York boat. One of its boards had not perished in the burning. It was driven so deeply in the ground that the carved initials of Orkney John and young Jack Prudham of Edmonton, Middlesex, were buried well below the surface of the rich soil of the river flat—the site John Walter had chosen for his homestead house. There was a tiny clear spring nearby, and all around stood a full growth of poplar and spruce for the building. He would have a fine sturdy house.

One day in the summer of a later year John Walter returned to the spot to begin work on this house that would face the palisades on the jutting embankment across the river. He found and withdrew the marker—the slab of boat-wood stuck into the ground a couple of years ago. The hardwood was still sound and strong. Somehow he could not fling it away or destroy it, so it was washed in the spring and laid upon the bank to dry in the sun. When the house showed high above the branches the builder found a use for it; with some supporting brackets of deer horn he fashioned it into a shelf for the kitchen clock. As time went by housekeepers dusting that shelf would pause to wonder at the letters inscribed there

—“Year fifty-two?—*fifty-two*. Why that’s over ninety years ago!” *Ninety years—ninety years—ninety years*—the clock would echo, ticking away without a single pause, *what’s that?* Those lads who had carved the letters were not to see them again; but once, years later, a lone descendant pondered long upon those initials his father had put upon a York boat in 1852.



Chapter Five

On Saving a Fine Horse

C OLD fall winds swept the grassy slopes of the rolling plains and made them bare and clean. In the copses, thin little trees rattled their leafless forms together with a sound like chattering teeth. Grain, from fields stretching northwards from the palisaded fort, had been garnered in; and the potato ground in front of the factor's new house,¹ ran a long, undulating strip

of velvety black to the river. No Indian tepees stood about to give their bright and lively decor to the scene. Blackfoot and Cree alike had gone to find the places of good hunting for the winter. The whole land, in bleak, brown dress, stood ready—waiting—to be brought to new beauty with a blanketing of winter snow.

Within the fort all had been going its usual, orderly way, until it was observed on a night in late October that a teeming activity stirred over the Company settlement. Men crowded about with the brittle ground ice cracking beneath their feet. They put up tent after tent, both within and without the picketed walls of the fort, and their lights inside made them glow in the distance like live, warm things. They put up a larger tent, and many hands brought straw and hay to blanket the frozen ground. In there they led the horses—fine animals, of good breeding—limping and stumbling from exhaustion. Many cattle lowed faintly, as though they, too, were weakened from some great effort. Like the men with whom they had come over the vast distances, their eyes were sick and starving. The men, nearly a hundred, moved in the slow, mechanical fashion of those near state of collapse. Many of them wore uniforms² which had tunics of scarlet. The "A" division men of the ³North West Mounted Police of Canada had arrived in Fort Edmonton.⁴

The excruciating hardships they had undergone in their thousand mile trek showed in their gaunt faces, their dishevelled attire. The people of Fort Edmonton recognized at once the need for help in this emergency. All hands were giving aid. Now every window of the Big House and Bachelors' Hall, too, was lighted. As many as could be accommodated were billeted indoors. Here were warmth—shelter—food. After the animals were attended to there would be rest. The men of the force were almost giddy with relief.

Constable LeGrand feeling all this, nevertheless, remained in the big tent for the horses, staring into space in deepest dejection. He sat on a blanket beside Bluebell. Bluebell, his

own horse, lay prostrate on her side on the hay, and she was dying. He couldn't leave her. The finest mount ever bred in their Oakville stables—the pride of his heart—was going to die. The voice of their commander that morning rang in his ears: "*We will go on—lead our horses—not one shall be shot. They are property of the crown. We will march on to Edmonton today, if we have to get there, crawling on our bellies!*" The words had seemed inhuman in their cruelty. Only since their arrival had it been disclosed that rations had run out. The timbered country before Edmonton had given the animals only scant feeding⁵ in the last weeks. Had it become much colder they all might have perished. He'd done all he could for the horses—rubbed their joints, tended their saddle sores, treated them as gently as possible—and yet Bluebell, his own mare, for whom he had done the most—was more stricken than any other. Her back and heels were raw, she hadn't touched food brought right to her mouth. Bluebell giving up!—he was near weeping.

"Had the horses been my own property I should have killed them; they are just skeletons!" It was the Inspector talking to the Hudson's Bay man outside the tent. The tones were apologetic. What was the use of that *now*?

He became aware of someone standing beside him. Apathetically, he raised his head to see. It was a woman. A slight person, though of commanding carriage, wearing a long ulster of grey woollen cloth. She held out a cup of steaming broth to him. Then her eyes became intent on Bluebell.

"Eoh! The poo-ah beast! Why don't you have the decency to shoot her?"

Alec's eyelids fluttered—he was gulping a mouthful of the scalding liquid. In his state of hopeless lethargy the remark, so irritating, almost aroused his pleasure.

He bowed respectfully. "Yes, ma'm. Not allowed, ma'm."

"Hasn't she eaten anything?"

"Yes, ma'm. She won't eat."

'Yes ma'm,' *not* allowed. 'Yes ma'm,' she will *not* eat! What sort of jargon was this? Probably wants to be polite. Agnes saw in the stricken horse the unmistakable signs of good breeding.

"I'd make huh." She scrutinized the man—noted his lean length, the height of his brow—the suffering, deep-set eyes. "Look heah. I've got to dash now—dole this to the othah men"—she indicated a pitcher in a covered basket under her arm. "I'll be back with something to help." With swift, energetic stride she was off.

Alec finished the broth—good hefty meat broth—and was somewhat revived. Perhaps it was what the woman said that started him stroking the afflicted animal again. He did it very, very gently—almost reverently.

True to her word, Agnes Fennell returned. Together they struggled to administer the drench Agnes had brought.

Alec marvelled at the woman's strength and perseverance. The remedy⁶ was admirable—quite admirable. It contained saffron, treacle and 'vin blanc.' She bent over Bluebell's hind legs.

"Now, my pretty lady, your hoof!" The riven heel was washed with care and then a special ointment, that smelled strongly of turpentine, was applied. Next she began winding the heel with a bandage. All this while Agnes was down on her knees with sleeves rolled back, her cheeks glowing hot from her efforts. She looked altogether handsome.

"I don't believe I've ever seen so many bleeding horse feet in my life!" said Agnes, looking around at the other horses in the tent.

"Yes'm, we left a red trail for miles, lady."

"How owe-full!"

"Bluebell here hadn't a chance. She was over-ridden, ma'm, the night before we started from Roche Perce, the night of the storm."⁷

"The staw-hm?" She leaned forward.

"Yes'm—the God awfulest bolt of lightnin' came right down in the wagon corral—and the horses stampeded like all

hell let loose. They broke their halters like threads and were off. God aw'mighty couldn't 'a stopped 'em. They tipped over the wagons, trampled our men, tents, 'n' everythin' inside 'em ——."

"How owe-full"

"... Bluebell here was on her long rope—I was patrollin' outside the circle of wagons—so I had her held. I saddled her and made after 'em."

"Eo-oh!" breathed Agnes.

"I gave 'er her head. It was pitch black—and she went—lady—she went like the wind."

"How wonderful!" sinking back on her knees.

"I never saw those scared-crazy horses 'til dawn—and then we'd gone clear back to the boundary.⁸ We turned 'em—she still had run in her, ma'm—and got 'em back to camp by noonday."

Agnes Fennell's fingers trailed tenderly along Bluebell's neck. "She's *wonderful*—a wonderful lady!" There was awe in her voice now.

"And you, ma'm—you're a wonderful lady!"

Agnes Fennell looked up sharply at the young constable. He had spoken with such fervour. The flickering light in the tent showed his narrow face that dark hair and sideburns made even paler by contrast.

With her usual forthright candour Agnes Fennell looked directly into his eyes. She saw them do a remarkable thing. They suffused with sudden darkness and remained glowing steadily upon her. It was strangely stirring—that gaze. She had never encountered so ardent a glance from a man before. She was held by its fascinating spell. No response was given his word of praise.

Before her the inanimate body of the afflicted beast felt cold beneath her hands. Now everything must be done to save this fine spirited horse for its gallant master.

"Heat! We must have her warmer," she spoke in urgent voice. "Our hands, too, should be warm—rubbing her." She

put her own to burning cheeks, then reached to touch his. His were clammy with cold.

"Go inside," she ordered. "Get yourself warm—have some food. I'll send for blankets—hot stones ——."

She went to the long centre aisle of the tent between the stabled horses. "Muchias! John!—John Walter!" she called, and then turned back to Constable LeGrand. "Go," she urged upon the reluctant Alec. "We shan't let her die."

Afterwards when he returned he found his horse under a covering of blankets and buffalo hides, with Agnes bent over anxiously at the mare's head. He had learned this spirited girl's name at mess—that she was a skilled horsewoman. A slight tremor moved the blanket covering; he thought he heard Bluebell cough. Then she hadn't died! At once he was overwhelmingly hopeful. A good hot meal, the first of its kind for more than a month, had done wonders for him. "Mac," the cook, had given him another hot stone upon leaving for the tent, with the words: "That's for *you*, my man. It'll be cold out tonight under the tent." And he added with a low intimate hiss: "I know *her*, she'll think of the horse, all right—but not of *you*!"

Now Alec put the stone down and strode to where Agnes Fennell stood and gripped her hands with real strength. "It'll be your turn now, Miss, to go in—get warm ——."

Agnes Fennell lifted her face to see those eyes again. Above average in height, she usually looked at men with eyes level, head rigid. With Constable LeGrand's six foot three towering above her, she couldn't. The new gesture, chin upraised, became Miss Fennell, it curved her neck, flexed her back and thus threw her whole form into more graciously curved lines. LeGrand saw the curving slim throat that the protecting high stock collar of a riding suit had permitted to remain white in four long summers of weathering sun and wind.

One of her hands was clenched tight beneath his. It was opened to show her palm filled with moistened bran. "I keep it warm this way. Bluebell took some—ever so little," whis-

pered Agnes. "When she takes more, she must be raised and exercised." Alec noted that it was colder and darker in the tent with the light turned low. He had come from a cheerful room, well lighted and warmed. It was cold out here and Miss Fennell's hands no longer felt warm either—but she was adamant.

"Listen!" she said raspingly, "to all the othah beasts—*eating.*"

They could hear the other horses, the tougher ones, steadily crunching the hay. All the men were gone now; they had 'turned in' for well-deserved rest. Bluebell, Agnes decided, must be brought to eating, too. So they raised first her head, then the front of her body, the while constantly plying bran mash to her mouth.

Alec's hot stone was placed at their own feet, with a blanket wound all around themselves for warmth. With Agnes questioning—he told her much more of 'Pretty Bluebell,' her pedigree, her habits, her deeds.

"Just to think that had it not been for *her* that night—you'd never have reached heah at all!—and *you*—you rode her —."

So the questions about Bluebell, the horse, led naturally to those about Alec, the man, who rode her. He told of the experiences of the road—of another trek a year ago, when he, with the originals,⁹ travelled the Dawson Route¹⁰ west to Fort Garry—the many miles of corduroy road they built over the muskegs.

"I guess father would never have sold Bluebell to the force if he had known the tough work we had to put her to," he added sorrowfully.

"Indian ponies are tough—but scrubby, untrained little beasts," said Agnes, using the same voice of contempt with which she always spoke of anything connected with the Redman. She had been thrilled with Alec's account, only interjecting now and again an 'Ehoh—how owe-ful' Now she spoke of the lawlessness¹¹ and the Indians in Edmonton

—the 'hawlf' breeds who were 'swauming' the country; of an Indian murderer¹² flaunting scalps right in her face. "I'm glad you've come," she said finally. And Alec simply echoed her words once more, glancing around at the weakened, bony-ribbed horses lying about in the tent—not one among them ready for troop duty.

Agnes saw the glance that went with his words. "He realizes," she thought, "that I can help." It made her glow. She *would* help him.

They managed to force a little food upon the still prostrate Bluebell, and later in the night to raise her to her feet. They passed a blanket under her belly, shouldered it from either side, and got her up. It was a feat Alec found himself doing easily from long practice. All the while Agnes coaxed the mare in a voice as tender as a mother to her child: "They-ah, now, you brave—gallant—DEE-ah!" And every endearing word caressed Alec's ears as sweetly as though said directly to him.

Gently, they walked pretty Bluebell up and down the tent aisle, Agnes leading, with her cheek beside the head, and Alec behind, supporting the faltering legs. For fear of the animal's complete collapse they only urged a little walk between long intervals. After each of these they would rest her, cover her well, and crawl under their blanket covering to warm themselves. Mac's heated stone was placed at their feet. The night was bitter. Both felt that the mare was improving—that she gradually showed a little less weakness. They talked to keep one another awake.

"Your name, Alec, is an altogether elegant one—are your people really 'the grand'?"

"Oh, no—no—Miss," he replied vehemently. They were, he insisted, 'just plain, hard-working folk'—back on a farm near Toronto.

"My grandpa once lived in N'Awilins, but the family jus' kep' comin' further Nawth." His father, he told her, had taken the

horses from the Kentucky ranch and settled 'up that country' where the hardwood trees got all scarlet—on Lake Ontario.

"... and now you-ah he-ah on the Nawth Saskatchewan," Agnes finished for him—looking at him squarely.

"... and you, too, Miss," answered he, carefully enfolding her shivering shoulders with the cape of his greatcoat.

Agnes found herself telling why she had come, of her bitterness over a stepfather, who, with his young children, now lived in her home in England; of her finding herself with nothing after her mother's death; the necessity of her doing the stableman's work as a young girl, after her own father's death. It had meant either that, or giving up their riding horses, she said, "... and you might know what I chose!"

Sometimes he dozed off, and she drowsed, too. Then Alec brought from his pocket a big, flat timepiece so they could stand watch, turn about. It was an interesting old piece of jewelry—his dead grandfather's watch. While Alec slept, Agnes studied it closely. She held it in her palm, still warm from being close to his body, and pulsating with a healthy 'tick.' On the back she could trace an incrested coat of arms with her finger. The head of the key wind was jewelled with a blood agate. Undoubtedly an heirloom of the LeGrand family, the "Plain, hard-working folk" of Ontario. She looked down at the face beside her, so nobly defined in repose, the long slender back, bespeaking centuries of idle ancestors. "'Plain, hard-working folk' indeed," thought Agnes. She watched the little decorated hands of the watch move on. It would soon be time to walk Bluebell, and she would have to waken Alec. He was in the deep slumber of complete physical exhaustion. Regrettable to do this, she averred, but I must. Her hand closed over his great long one.

"Alec," she called softly, "it's hawlf-aftah five!"

This time the raising was easy, the steps more certain. When they lowered the mare once more on her bed of hay she kept her head and shoulders upright upon kneeling forelegs. It was true—the mare was going to get better! The

two who had brought her from death looked on with held breath. They were stiff, and cold, and tired, but became immediately happily garrulous.

"Look!" said Agnes, clutching at the man, "she's nibbling the hay!"

Yes, pretty Bluebell, the dark purplish bay, sired by one of America's greatest, and the pride of the LeGrand stable, was once more taking interest in her provender. She would live. In the grey light of approaching dawn they huddled shoulder to shoulder and watched wonderingly. Then the man put his head down to that of the woman beside him, and they stood nuzzling one another like friendly, loving ponies, in pure joy over the happening of the night.

The house kitchen was empty and dim as Agnes came through to reach the backstairs. The cook had not yet come. She told herself it wouldn't have mattered if he had. "I would just have laughed right in his silly surprised face. He and his sarcasms—his innuendos about me being a spinster! I'd like to tell him right out that I'm now loved and desired by a man heroic and strong—handsome and young!"

Agnes Fennell laughed silently, imagining the shock he'd receive at this. She was going upstairs slowly and quietly, not in her usual way of attacking each step as though it were a personal affront. The walls of newly-sawn logs gleamed palely alongside her in the half light.

Continuing on the next flight, she reached her room with its gabled windows facing the back. It was an exact counterpart of her room in the old Rowand's Folly; her own retreat for nearly four years; but now room and furnishings appeared new and strange in the cold light. She sat in a chair next the window still dreamy eyed, and a little dazed; she had helped to save the life of a wonderful horse and was in love with its rider, Constable Alexander Royale LeGrand.

* * * * *

"How old are you, Alec?"

"Twenty-four, come March."

He gave me his age on his birthday to come, she thought, because he realizes I'm older than he. Dear Alec, always mindful of my feelings! That, of course, is what makes a man the gentleman he is, instead of a yokel. If he asks *me* now, shall I answer "I'm in my twenties, too," as I had planned, or shall I say quite frankly, "I'll be *thirty* come May?" Agnes waited expectantly; but he didn't ask her anything—just squeezed her arm drawn through his a bit tighter and went on humming under his breath: "Un-un—to the hi-i-lls—will—I—lift up mine eyes —."

It was a bright, cold Sunday in January and they were walking to church. The sky was clearest blue and all around them snow was dazzlingly white. They followed the track broken by sleighs, which ran an easy wind from the fort to the church and settlement further east along the river. As they neared the church they came to a rim of the great bluff that overlooked the Saskatchewan. Alec stopped.

"It's this," he said, making a sweeping gesture towards the grandeur before them, "that makes me like it here—clean, free—virginal."

"'Virginal,' and his eyes rest on me." She felt her cheeks grow warm. Agnes looked steadily at the snow-covered banks across the valley, her face flushed to rosiness. This happened often now—her chin had lost its set lines—her manner was no longer brusque. She had changed. Formerly she hadn't gone to church either. Being 'high church,' the informal service of the Methodists, including the odd word in Cree,¹³ had not been of much appeal. Now she went because of Alec's singing. When Alec's resonant baritone rang out in the hymn singing, she felt worshipful. Holding their common hymnal, with one hand tucked beneath his arm, she could feel his strongly vibrating chest. It made her tingle as pleasurably as though she were touching the quivering body of a great sounding bell. Her lips would form the words dutifully

without giving them voice—she listened and heard only Alec —.

With seven verses well sung, they resumed their seats—home-made bench seats that poised the sitters in rigid attention. A few Indians squatted cross-legged against the wall. The church was filled—white settlers with their families—a number of the red uniformed police officers and the Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company lent their dignity to the assemblage.

Though her eyes never wavered from front, Agnes thought she saw the girl 'Miette' come in. "Growing up, she is—getting prettier. Why *here*, when she's Catholic? Flaunting her charms before the Mounties, I dare say, the little hussy! Alec won't notice her, though. He *sees only me*. I've my formal dress on, with the high collar—the kind he doesn't like. He says it covers his favorite kissing place. How tremendously shiny his boots are! I believe I can smell their polish! There's a nice leathery smell all about him I love—like the saddle room —. Ah! Now we have another word in Cree: 'Ke-che-we-gee-too-win?' Oh! So it means lawful *marriage*—Christian marriage—does it? Well, *I am* going to marry Alec LeGrand. He hasn't means, doesn't even own what's on his back. I said mother was a fool to marry her penniless widower. A constable is supposed to serve several years before he marries. Six years? Of *course* we won't wait that long. 'Ke-che-we-GEE too win—the *true* way—the *right* way of living together—says this man—and by inference means only to urge this part of his sermon upon the *Indians* present—yet *we* —."

". . . An Anglican minister is coming west. People asked for him. He'll be here next winter—we'll have a proper wedding ceremony. Then we'll ride off *together*—not just Alec riding away to his new headquarters and me staying here—indoors, watching the children, teaching them manners—ironing, washing their clothing—mending —."

Thus the thoughts of Miss Agnes Fennell during the

missionary's excellent sermon, the while her eyes remained devoutly focussed ahead and her face piously addressed to to the pulpit as that of a good Anglican in church should always be.

Down on the frozen river Muchias was scraping snow from a long clearing on the ice near the shore-line. It made for a good skating place—where the wind had blown snow from the ice. He was making it a bit wider for the skaters that afternoon. The river, and all that pertained to it for the people living near, was the special concern of the dwarf-legged Muchias. Whenever folk mentioned how good the water tasted, what pleasant skating it afforded—he was happy.

That winter of '74-5 was an arduous one for Muchias. He had to see that his river served the many extra people well. Now that their animals were all back to normal health and strength, the police people would be going soon—he knew. Even though they had made greater effort necessary on his part, he would be sorry to see them leave. Some had already gone to build their new fort down stream, "Fort Saskatchewan" they called it—after the river. This pleased him.

He rolled logs near the cleared ice for the skaters to sit upon, and then placed a smaller one a little distance away by itself. Muchias knew about the lovers. He thought about them, too.

When a certain young constable's graceful figure speeded over the ice, his skithering blades leaving a series of fantastic scrolls behind, the dwarfed breed watched earnestly in awed admiration, without a thought of envy. Yet Muchias was over twenty now, knowing he would never grow taller than a child.

On that sunny Sabbath day of January the skating was never better, nor Alec, the skater, in better form. The temperature had made the river ice ideal for doing his feats on skates, and Muchias had swept it to a glossy smoothness. The greater space, too, helped in making the jumps over the logs. They piled them up in twos, threes and fours—Alec leaped over all, crosswise and lengthwise. Then he made his partner,

a mere novice upon skates, appear to float over the ice like a feather. He supported Agnes firmly by the arm until she felt greater confidence, when he began tossing and spinning her about at arm's length, as though she were a plaything in his hands. "I've got you—don't be afraid," he would murmur. Actually she felt no fear, would only be a little breathless from the exhilaration and movement. Once, about to lose balance, she found herself swept off her feet, whirled about with the speed of a spinning top. She was swinging into space, light as air, flying so fast she could scarcely see, catching only the sun's bright flash upon skates swinging out before, beneath her billowing skirts. Then gradually the movement slowed, and miraculously she was safely upright upon the blades once more. Everyone was applauding—there were even shouts of: "Bravo LeGrand! Bravo!"

"Oh Alec—you—you *devil* you!" gasped the panting girl, her cheek pressed against his red coat sleeve.

After the skating it was pleasanter still for the skaters to have tea in the big warm living room of Factor Hardisty's. They all trooped up the hill with exaggerated groans of weariness and noisily stomped the snow from their boots upon reaching the verandah of the factor's house. Alec sniffed the air inside and knew the cook had raisin scones in the oven for them. They were delicious, served hot with berry jam. He told Agnes Mac was going to teach him how they were made. Alec and the cook got along famously. Even Agnes found 'Cook' tolerable now. She wondered why he had formerly seemed so objectionable. He really had admirable qualities—had 'Mac' the cook.

The Sunday evenings of that winter were the happiest times of her life. Agnes noted that Alec was treated with the same deference and hospitality as his superior officers present; and inwardly she acknowledged at once the worth of this spirit of western democracy. She, herself, a servant of the house, was meted the same respect by them all as the factor's wife, her employer. The policemen served her, 'attended Miss Fennell's

wants' as though she were a grand lady. "*You, ma'm, are a wonderful lady*"—these were the words of Alec that he reiterated by word or deed, over and over again. To be sure, he had dropped the 'M'am' in addressing her, at her expressed wish (Alec had other little peculiarities in his speech of which she must make him mindful), but the meaning was always the same. Even when he fondled her, running his incredibly long hands around her waist, shoulders and slender bosom, murmuring "Lord! what a light filly she is!" she exulted over knowing she was still that 'wonderful lady' of his heart.

At the party, with the 'police boys' in great spirits and readily offering their bright entertainment, they would not speak to each other; yet in mind such thoughts ran:

"'He' sees I've changed my attire. He's even taller, *better looking* than the others" and so on—beginning always with 'he,' 'he,' 'he.' Likewise Alec, apparently listening to the words of one of his fellows of the force, was thinking in terms of 'she, she, she' in moods present, past and future: "she has on that soft dress I like—it shows her pretty delicate throat. I'd like to sink my teeth in it and drag her away like a savage. She'd probably tell me how 'awful' I was. 'She' didn't like my saying that I was repaid in other ways, being a policeman, besides my sixty cents a day. She said she had too much of 'stressing the spiritual over the material kind of thing' at home from her step-father, a minister." And for the future: "She'd make a wonderful companion on the road with the horses!"

These vagrant thoughts kept them shyly quiet among the others. They found themselves being listeners. All knew of Agnes' genuine interest and knowledge of horses and talked to her of them. Some had seen her while she rode, and others observed her watching manoeuvres holding the child, Richard, by the hand.

'Ricky' would be told that if he were 'good' and would lie down for his nap, or finish his food without dawdling, he could go with Miss Fennell to watch the horses drill. Whereupon the child would shut his eyes obediently for sleep, and afterwards

upon waking, would spoon up his porridge with such vigour and dispatch that he would be rewarded.

Then he would see those beautifully groomed creatures canter, trot and gallop in perfect rhythm and formation, watch them kneel at the signal of a touch on the shoulder with the crop. When they all lay stretched out prone, Ricky would squeal with ecstasy.

Yes, that winter when the Northwest 'Mounted' quartered in Edmonton, was a memorable one for many more than Ricky. Indians came from afar to see with their own eyes the stirring spectacle of which they had only heard. One old Woods Cree chief was mightily pleased with those fine red coats. He desired nothing so much as to possess one for himself. He offered handsome gifts in exchange. He left baffled and chagrined at consistent refusal, even though he had promised one officer the hand of his prettiest daughter.

On a day in late March, when a sudden 'Chinook' was licking up snows from the plains like a great mother tongue, the 'Mounted' rode away. In the tower of one of the north bastions of the fort, Agnes Fennell stood with the Hardistys to watch them go. Cattle and freight carts had gone the day before, leaving the men on their horses to follow.

They marched in double line in their usual order.¹⁴ The dark bays first, the light chestnuts next—then came the greys and blacks, and finally the light bays. As they filed past the bastion, where the factor and his party stood watching, the officers in the lead saluted, and there was shouting and some musket fire as farewell. The sudden shooting startled those in the tower, but the horses continued in their even, proud gait; not one horse breaking step. They had been well trained.

"Oh! but they're wonderful," breathed the factor's wife, clasping her hands. "Just wonderful! Aren't they Richard?"

"Yes," he agreed, and nodded thoughtfully, but could not deny a feeling of genuine relief that their stay was ended. So many men, so many horses, it had been a great load—differences had arisen—it was inevitable that they should.

The slender figure of the governess remained tense and immobile. Fresh spring winds blew back her pale brown hair. She remained in rapt attention and did not speak.

Love for a man, which a spirited arrogance had nearly throttled out of her existence, had been awakened and was now profound and fierce. The object of her desires was riding away. When she finally turned, her eyes were shining with tears.

Last night, in the anguish of this parting, they had made their plans. Being downright in everything, Agnes had offered her entire savings, nearly seven hundred dollars, for which Alec was to purchase a blooded stallion across the border, in Montana. With Bluebell, they would breed horses—start ranching—on land of their own.

The tears, shining in Agnes Fennell's eyes, were not tears of hopelessness.



Chapter Six

What Happened At The Hermitage

AS Agnes Fennell had hoped, the Anglican¹ minister came the following autumn. He came directly from his studies at Keble College, Oxford, with its aura of scholastic distinction eminently upon him.

Daniel Newbridge, who never before had suffered hunger, cold, misery of perplexity or the discomfort of a mosquito

bite, came to Edmonton on the Saskatchewan, and was there to learn well all the woes of such experience.

Perhaps, all unconsciously, that is why he had come. Life with his father, the vicar, as long as he could remember, had always been so mildly agreeable, in a home well appointed, a garden perfectly kept, and an income so certain; that he had felt a craving for a new life otherwise. Perhaps here there might be made mention, too, of Helene. But then again, the two appeared to hold one another only in mildest friendly affection, so why need there be mention of this young lady at all?

To that faraway mission at Edmonton, where savages roamed the plains, Daniel Newbridge came, and brought with him a youth, an orphan boy² of sixteen, who was to be his helper, companion and brother. Tomison Grant, the son of a former gardener, was an unusual lad. Though undersized and of delicate build, he possessed the intellect and understanding of one far beyond his years. Under a prominent brow, which was often wrinkled up quizzically during speech, his features showed charmingly sensitive and fine. He would smile shyly at the more voluble Daniel, his senior of eleven years.

All his life he had followed Daniel Newbridge. As a child he had been constantly at his heels in the garden. Together they had watched John Grant dig and plant with careful hands and mind. That had been during Daniel's vacation days from school. And to Tomison it was a matter of greatest pride that Daniel's last year at Oxford found him entered there, too, as a special student in the humanities.

That same year Tomison's father had died, and he was deprived of further means to continue study. Distract and uncertain as to what occupation to undertake, he had been overwhelmingly glad of Daniel's invitation to accompany him to Canada.

At sixteen the adventure held wondrous appeal. The episode of his father's sojourn in Rupertsland more than twenty years

ago had been given him in only vague and fragmentary terms. It had naturally intrigued his curiosity, and he had been eager for a larger view of it. So again he followed Daniel Newbridge—this time to Canada. After five months of travelling they arrived at Edmonton, faces blistered and swollen from the rigours of so much outdoor travel. The Rev. Daniel lost no time in erecting a place of his own. With his private means available, this offered no great difficulty. The choosing of a site was another matter.

Immediately upon arrival they found temporary quarters at the settlement's only hostel,³ which proved to be a log dwelling picturesquely situated half way up the river embankment. Directly above could be seen the Wesleyan Church, and below, the river made a long sweeping bend towards the west. Daniel wanted just such a site for his house. At table, where were a motley of miners, surveyors and farmer settlers, he learned that all the attractive river frontage plots were already claimed⁴—nearly two miles of river frontage was in reserve for the Hudson's Bay Company alone.

Nevertheless he and Tomison trudged many a weary mile about the settlement⁵ already vastly spread on an even vaster wilderness. Fortunately he had purchased a horse and a light buggy in Fort Garry. The horse, a tough nag, they named "Christopher" and the rig "Columbus."

After one long arduous day of driving, when they had gone several miles down-stream from the hostel, they came upon a sudden deep drop in the embankment along the river. An Indian pitching trail took them down the heavily wooded hill to where a rushing crystal-clear stream flowed over a rocky bed.

They were dusty and hot from the long drive in the heat of the sun. The stream refreshed them mightily. After, they sat on the rocks and dangled bare feet in the cool water. They could scarcely drag Christopher away from the luscious green grass along its shores. When they had climbed the jutting knoll on the opposite side of the ravine, a scene of rare beauty

spread before them. The wooded banks across, on river and ravine, were riotous with autumn colour; the deep green of evergreens offering a foil for the reds and light yellows of birch and poplar trees.

"Tomison, lad, we have found it—the site!"

They sat beneath a dense cluster of sturdy evergreens and appraised the view before them.

"... I ask no more than to quaff from such cooling waters—feast mine eyes upon yon beauteous hills —."

Tom's brows were uplifted a bit skeptically at Daniel's mock grandiloquence. "But it's far, sir, far from —."

"Far? Far from *what*? Our parishioners aren't as yet anywhere. They roam —."

"Well, we'll be like hermits out here—all alone —."

"Hermits! The very thing! I like the very sound of the word, Tom. *Hermits* we shall be then, in our 'Hermitage.'⁶ The study shall face the river—the sleeping rooms upstairs—kitchen to the west —."

And so it was to be. Consideration of the kitchen brought to their minds that they were extremely hungry. Tom suggested that fish were plentiful in the river below. Catching them, however, would be inconvenient and difficult without proper means—he was equally certain of that.

The Reverend Daniel, through pangs of hunger, was learning the first great lesson of life on the frontier—the need of being self-sufficient and foresighted in providing daily food.

By the time they had driven back to the hostel Daniel and Tom were ravenous. Inside, evening supper table was already neatly laid, and on each plate was a large unpeeled golden turnip.⁷

"Sorry, boys," murmured the young proprietor to the men, as all eagerly pulled chairs to the table, "heat's turned our meat foul and not a damned Indian brings us pemmican —."

The Rev. Daniel Newbridge bowed over his plate for a brief moment or two and then ate what was there with astonishing relish.

* * * * *

The insistent pounding beat of the drums could be heard right to the river bank where was the ferry crossing. Chief Ta-ha-kooch was celebrating the spring thirst dance.⁸ The Metis admitted no part in it—but they were always somewhat affected by it—it incited them—particularly their younger people. As the river ferry made its slow course across to the south bank, Miette could see a group of these gathered along the shore—could even hear Lena's coarse laughter. The young Indian boys, pretending they had great thirst from their two days of dancing with drinking, would beg the girls to offer up a drink. When a girl complied, the boy became her accepted suitor; he would give chase, and they would disappear in the bushes. Miette knew well what that meant—the retreat to the bushes—and hated it with all the fervency of her virgin young soul—and feared it, too. Though she avoided the courting groups along streams and rivers, there were those brother and sister teasings, with chasings from Jean, at home. Jean's chasing of Lena, Therese and Natale would soon be abandoned, but was always continued in hard earnest upon herself. She wasn't Jean's sister, and he knew it. Whenever at home, his bold black eyes would follow the enticing movement of her prettily curved limbs and body. Jean, a great hulking youth, vowed he'd get her one day, be she ever so swift to evade him.

Instinct warned Miette that she was only safe at home when Jeanette was there. Jean would respect his mother's presence. She sensed Jeanette's growing coldness and disfavour because of Jean and realized that she might not be able to wait for Natale's going into the convent at St. Albert. Natale had plans to enter the sisterhood there, and Miette was to go with her.

During the day she kept away from the Borgereau home, and left Natale to tend to the many babies of their settlement. Their settlement had grown, too; in the past four years the log shanties with mud roofs had increased in number along the winding Mill Creek valley.

Lena, Rosetta Generoux, as well as Miette all earned a little

money for their domestic services in the village. They minded babies and often carried large bundles of washing with them when they came away from homes—which would be returned on some following day, indifferently laundered.

On one occasion, when Miette was bringing back a large wash bundle to a camp of survey men on Garneau's hill, she'd peeped inside Mrs. Garneau's kitchen and saw the lady ironing garments to a becoming smoothness. Miette had sat on the doorstep of the spotless kitchen and watched the fair-haired Scotswoman at work. She'd begged to try, and then she too learned to wield a laundry iron. Thereafter she brought her washing done in the creek below up the hill to the Garneau kitchen so that the small garments of the Stinson baby she minded could be neatly ironed, too. Once while ironing she'd heard the music of a fiddle⁹ coming from the front room and fell so deeply under its enchanting music that she scorched the garment under the iron. But it had been only her own dress instead of little Robert Stinson's, so it had mattered not so much.

Her abounding love for babies had not diminished, and the afternoons with the Stinson baby were her times of sheer happiness. She would take the baby, all pink and smiling, "out riding." The Stinsons were newly come to Edmonton and hadn't yet acquired a baby carriage—so little Robert was placed on a pillow in a wash basket, which was in turn tied to a small four-wheeled cart. Little Robert was now ready for his "outing" with Miette. Miette would draw the cart carefully only on smooth ground and a sidewalk of parallel planking, constantly turning her head or walking backward so that her eyes might always rest upon the precious load.

One time after she had been walking backward for a while she had barely discovered in time that she was about to back into an approaching vehicle—a handsome wicker baby carriage with a ruffled green satin parasol to shade its occupant.

Lena Borgereau, herself, wheeling the Archambault infant!

Lena shouted imprecations at her, and the two girls glared at one another. Miette was filled with envious longings for the child's carriage, the parasol and an elaborate ruche on the baby's bonnet. She could have snatched them all away from Lena and the Archambault child, who was not nearly so dear and sweet as her "Robert." Miette called him "Robe-aire." She decided not to give an inch of ground—she had the advantage there—she stood *between* her charge and that baby carriage.

After a strenuous battle of words, accompanied by savage grimaces, Lena was obliged to turn out and give Miette's cart the right of way. Miette could hold her own with Lena. At the first clump of trees she passed after that she stopped and with the skilful, patient fingers of her Indian mother, plaited and interlaced large green leaves to make a green shade for her sleeping charge.

Mrs. Stinson's eyes were a little anxious over the lateness of her baby's return that day. The afternoon had turned warm and she had had qualms about Robert's being too long exposed to the sun's heat.

"Dear, dear ——!" she said, after seeing the child comfortable under Miette's leafy shelter, and so surprised she could scarcely bring herself to say the chiding words she had intended: "*Whatever* have you been doing?"

And the woman and the girl, who both lavished so great an affection upon the child, looked at one another askance—even a little fearfully—over an abyss of misunderstanding.

Mrs. Stinson noticed the almost fierce possessiveness in Miette's arms as she lifted little "Bobbie" from the basket and thought: "She'd like to keep him all the time, I suppose!"

And something like that, indeed, was in the back of Miette's mind as she carried Bobbie to a sofa in the cool shaded room. She would like to have stayed there—slept at Bobbie's feet like a watchdog. Her practised eye noted that Mrs. Stinson was going to have another child, though the dainty flowing apparel gave her enlarged form almost an air of fragility. With

Mama Borgereau, Miette could tell when the baby would come by a rising front skirt hem. When Jeanette's bulky skirts were hoisted in front to the point of revealing her baggy stockinged knees it was soon time. This was the case now.

Mrs. Stinson gave Miette a ten-cent piece and told her she needn't stay longer. But Miette lingered at the doorway—loath to go—twisting a strand of her long, loose-hanging hair. She had tried to keep it in the customary two tight plaits—as Jeanette had admonished her to—but the sun burned hot on the nape of her neck, and so the braids were loosened once more.

"Stay?" she murmured shyly. "I can stay?"

"Stay?" echoed Mrs. Stinson in real consternation, her mistrust growing.

"I come tomorrow?"

"No."

"Nex' day?"

"We-ell, n-no-o."

Miette stood on one bare foot and then the other. Waited. She wouldn't leave until there was another day.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Stinson, somewhat exasperated, "you might come *Saturday*."

"Said-ir-day—yes—yes!" Miette left then, content to go.

A ferry boat now took her back to the Borgereau home on the south bank of the river. It was spring, the river was up. The girl noted the ferry was landing on a higher place on the bank than it had earlier in the day. The sound of sawing at Walter's sawmill had ceased—the men who cut and sawed lumber there all day would be at supper. John Walter had built first a house of his own that Miette thought a very fine one, with its high white walls and glazed windows, after which the sawing of lumber had gone on there steadily ever since, to make houses for others. Now she could see the slanting sunlight playing upon the bobbing logs that lay in a boom in front of the Walter place. Teams, boats in summer; sleds in winter; all strained in carrying loads of logs for

buildings that sprang up everywhere. All along the river banks, too, were the "grizzlies," that gold panners worked along the sandy bars in low water. The rising river today saw them being moved to higher ground levels. Like any great river that nourishes life along its valley—so the Saskatchewan teemed with the activity of its people that sunny spring day.

Miette made a detour up the hill to avoid passing near Lena with her courting young friends along the river shore. Eventually she reached the mouth of Mill Creek, where were the very young children. Natale was there. In four years Natale had changed only a little by becoming taller. Her heavy brows were still drawn together. She held André, her year-old brother, in her thin arms, supporting him on her stomach, with her narrow back well arched over the load. On her sallow face was the discontent of poor health.

Miette took André from her, wrinkling her nose in some distaste after sniffing him. Over his shoulder she looked searchingly at her foster sister. "Maman?" she said questioningly.

Natale shook her head. "Where is Lena?" she asked Miette sullenly.

Miette made a gesture up the river with her free arm and spat in that direction. "Faugh!" she uttered, and with this expressive reply went up the path to the shanties.

The Borgereau shanty was quite empty and still, except for flies buzzing on one small paned window that faced the western sun. Miette saw that Jeanette had tidied the bunks on either side of the room. The hard earth floor was swept. Mother Borgereau had seen well to the ways of her household before retiring to the privacy of the tepee nearby. The cook stove was not lit as it usually was for the preparation of their evening meal. Miette made André clean and comfortable with fresh moss. Then she burrowed into some old sacks in a dark corner of the shanty. In there were potatoes and some musty turnips. No meat. She was hungry. A tin cup with fish bait was on the window sill. She snatched it up

hastily, and lifting André in her arms again, went down the path back to Natale and the children.

"Go up and cook the roots, Natale," she ordered, "and I will catch fish to eat."

Natale did as she was told, grumbling a little.

Miette lost no time in baiting her fish lines on a willow stick and squatted down on a narrow clay ledge of river bank. She felt a little tired and leaned against the side of a boat that the grist mill man always kept there. The drums could still be heard faintly beating in the distance.

From time to time some of the children whimpered, as did André, too. An Indian woman came down from the lodge-settlement and spoke to Miette in rough Cree—telling her she was a lazy good-for-nothing, and should be at her home at work—busying herself in a manner befitting a grown girl. She went away muttering and scolding, taking along three of the little ones, two of them pulling at her skirts. Yetta came then and took her own brood, so there remained only Madeleine and André Borgereau on the bank with Miette. The evening air grew cooler, so she covered the two with an old blanket that lay in the boat. Then she rebaited her fish line, threw it out, and almost at once felt a bite. Soon after she made a small catch. Presently she could hear footsteps approaching on the river trail. They came from the direction of Lena and her crowd. Miette crouched down beside the boat and dropped her fishpole flat to the ground. She heard voices—male voices. She peered over the rim of the boat, and with the intentness of a cat observing passing dogs, she watched where the trail led out from the bushes.

Two persons appeared, and the girl relaxed a little. They were a boy—a slight boy—and a man whom she knew would be a minister, because of his long black coat, that was topped by a white collar. The boy was leading a harnessed horse. No Jean—no Indian boys. Miette raised her fishing pole again and resumed her angling.

Daniel was talking overmuch to hide from Tom the shock

he was feeling over what they had just seen. Tom knew it; knew Daniel was shaken by those rites of torture they had just witnessed at the thirst dance, as he, himself, was—only Daniel couldn't admit it—nor let him see it. He had to talk and talk to cover it up—his first real misgivings over this mission he had undertaken in the far northwest. How was he to teach these unspeakable savages the gentle cult of Jesus?

So the blustering Daniel was glad when he espied the Indian girl fishing, so as to have another victim for his garrulous tongue.

Now this Indian girl restored a feeling of equanimity within him at once. No sadistic savagery was suggested in this attractive child looking up at him with her large wondering eyes. He stopped, beamed upon her.

Tom didn't stop. He went on down stream a way to give Christopher a drink. This was the purpose in coming down to the river.

"I am very thirsty," said Daniel, seeing the tin cup without realizing its function. "May I have a drink from you?"

He was asking her for a drink! And quite unwittingly he had used the very word form of the betrothal rite.¹⁰

Miette caught her breath. Her startled eyes became even wider upon Daniel. A tall beautiful man, smiling down at her so benignly!

She grasped the cup at once, scooped out the abhorrent contents with a grubby finger, dipped it full from the stream and handed it up to the Reverend Daniel. She was quivering all over.

Daniel gulped. He couldn't drink it. He couldn't refuse it. Indians, he knew, were easily offended. He took Miette's proffered cup and bowed in an elaborate gratitude. (He was trying so hard to do right by the Indians!) He lifted his face to the sun. "Ah! the blessed bright sun! Should we not first pay homage to its glory—its blessed warmth. It brings the rains that made this river, that refreshes us when we are —." He rambled on and on, all the time sloshing, sloshing around

the water in the cup. Then he poured it out, dropping it back to the stream.

"And now, my pretty maid, *another* from your fair hand!" He gave back the cup. Miette filled it once more, and this time he drank. She was *doubly promised* now.

Christopher could be heard drinking with loud sucking noises where Tom had led him farther down. Tom was dashing water over his face and drinking from his hands. He was spent from their long journey in the heat. Christopher had big shining wet patches of sweat on him.

"Shall I remove his harness, sir?" called Tom in his full rich voice. It was a surprisingly big voice for one of Tom's stature. Even Miette noticed that. She smiled and said softly: "He iss leetle—and he talk—so beeg!"

Since he was only the size of a stripling, Miette was not afraid of Tom. She greeted him with a bright smile.

"Ah yes! Tom is big—biggest fellow around here—a miner, too. He dredges gold—and you should see him fell a tree. Meet 'Tom of the Timber'," said Daniel, clapping a friendly hand on Tom's shoulder.

Tom's embarrassment was acute. He was thinking what a jackass Dan could be at times. He put the toe of his boot to the fish that lay beside the girl and put a question as to its variety—others on the technique of catching them. Daniel joined in. Neither had been particularly successful in their fishing exploits.

They found that Miette understood them when they spoke slowly with simple words.

Were there big fish?

"Yes, yes, big fish."

They pointed down stream, north and east, where the Hermitage was, where they had fished without much success.

"You like fish?" she asked.

Oh, yes! They did. Only they had had no luck.

"I bring you fish," said Miette, suddenly comprehending. "Yes," she nodded, "tomorrow."

The Reverend Daniel Newbridge protested that it was far to the Hermitage, that in all probability she would be unable to find her way to it. He had no wish to be beholden to the girl. To which Miette listened in grave silence. She could have told him that his fears were groundless. She not only knew where the Hermitage was, but had camped on the stream below—summers—during the berry-picking season. As for the distance, she covered many miles on foot every day. It was her life. Last autumn she had seen the boat loads of lumber go from Walter's mill down stream to build the Hermitage; had even watched the building of it from Clover's bar¹¹ across the river. But of this she said nothing. She merely nodded to their "goodbyes" and repeated: "I come. I bring a big fish."

When Christopher's jangling harness could no longer be heard, Miette sprang up, picked up her fish and ran towards the path. She was very much excited. All out of breath, she nearly ran headlong into Natale coming down for her.

Natale saw that her sister was greatly affected. She suspected the worst. "You! You!" she said, almost in anger. "You gave in? You gave a drink? *You chased with boys?*" Her face was dark and accusing. There was a tacit understanding between them never to consent.

Miette almost laughed right to her face. Natale was right, and she was wrong. How could she tell her? She couldn't.

"Natale! Natale!" She thrust the fish upon her. "This little one—cook it—*vite!* I must catch a big one—a *big one for tomorrow!*"

She was about to turn back before Natale could respond, when they were both stopped short by a long-drawn howling cry. It came from the direction of the shanties up the path.

"Maman!" said Natale, shocked.

"Whu-uh-uh-oo-oo-ooh," went on Miette, imitating the cry she knew so well. "She thinks, perhaps, she is a wolf?" It was a brave attempt at facetiousness.

It came again, that cry. The girls looked at one another—sobered.

The howling started afresh, and then stopped abruptly. The two on the path waited a little breathlessly.

Suddenly Miette pushed Natale aside from her. "Go down," she cried, "and fish—and fish!" She ran on up the hill from whence came those howling cries.

Natale found the fish line dragged out into the water, with the willow stick caught around a stone. She pulled in the fish catch without enthusiasm and rebaited the hook from the tin cup that again was filled with jelly-like worms.

Madeleine was awake and whimpered for something to eat. She fussed and squirmed under the blanket.

Natale told her to be quiet and not to waken André. M'Yetta, she said, was coming back soon and then she could have food. She threw out her line into the sunlit brightness of the river and waited for another bite.

And later Miette came down to them, walking very, very carefully, all her excitement gone. In her arms she held a small bundle. Slowly she knelt down before them and drew back a corner of the limply wet skin covering. There lay the new-born infant of Jeanette. Its tiny red-brown figure writhed, extended and receded again, like a hapless uncertain worm. From a mouth opened wide as that of a newly hatched fledgeling came an abrupt, agonized squawk.

Lovingly Miette raised it up with its navel cord and genitals dangling long and loose.

"Your brother," she said solemnly.

"Bébé—bébé!" cried the little ones, now both wide awake and reaching out eagerly.

Natale's mouth puckered as though she were about to cry. But she didn't. She kept winking her weak eyes, that were gazing upon the river where it was bright in the sunset.

Tenderly Miette covered the new-born one, again to carry it back to Jeanette. She carried the precious bundle high up under her chin to feel the blessed warmth of new life against

her throat. Her eyes were upraised—her expression exalted. She prayed earnestly to the Virgin that this new-born son of Jeanette would grow strong and skilful in the hunt—that he would know the ways of men and bring about plenty for them all.

Long after the children had eaten their supper of fish and mashed vegetables and were lying asleep on the floor loft, Jean and Henri, the father, stumbled heavily into their bunks below. The elder Borgereau growled and swore fervently, evoking the sacred deities and intermingling all with what is foul and obscene in humanity.

Miette heard and shrank close beside Natale.

Henri Borgereau, returning from work in the bush, had found his wife missing from his bed.

For a while Miette lay uneasily awake, her face towards the stairwell opening to the floor below. Jean slept below.

She repeated nine Hail Marys and told herself she had much to be thankful for. There was a new baby in the Borgereau home, and Saturday she was going to have Robert. In the Garneau yard, beside a bush, she had found a good hiding hole for her coins, that not even Natale knew of—and this very day she had betrothed herself forever to one who was as fair as a god and smiled upon her with the benevolence of an angel.

* * * * *

The shovel clanged upon the wire grill atop Tom's "grizzly" as he flung the gravel into the dredging box. It had been a heaping spadeful and Tom was puffing from his effort. Miette, who had been watching the slight figure straining at work, put down her fish pole and walked out to the bar where Tom stood beside his gold dredger. In her eyes was thoughtful concern that was all maternal.

"I take shoof-ul, Tom," she said. "Me, betta' strong."

"*You!*" answered Tom in angry scorn. "You, 'better' strong!" He hated to be told by a girl that he wasn't strong. *He*, who had cut and dragged all the timber to make this "grizzly," and a stable, too, for Christopher, both which now stood conveniently close to the Hermitage. He crouched on haunches, better to view the descending progress of the gravel and sand.

The girl took advantage of Tom's momentary inattention to lift the shovel that was dropped.

"Voici, I do like Mista Gibbons,"¹² she said, and struck the spade into the gravel with a flourish, swinging it up smartly over the dredge box. Then she did it again—and again—apparently without effort. Tom's brows rode high as he squinted up at her. The secret of it was, of course, less gravel on the shovel.

"C'est cal!" cried Miette, well gratified. "My man now have plenty gold, too!"

"'Your' man!" she meant *Daniel*. "He's never *your* man, Miette," said Tom, still scornful.

"No-o—on? He is! Sure—my man, like you say—'oos-ban.'"

"Husband?" Tom was aghast.

"Ye-es, oh ye-es—he *care* for me!" She nodded for emphasis, and lifted up her brightly coloured shawl.

The shawl Daniel had given her! "Miettel!" Tom's strong voice was stern now. "You mean *takes* care. You should learn more of English before you speak of such things—and after *all those lessons* we've given you! I wonder if you know anything —?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Tom! I know much Englees —."

". . . just a silly, silly girl —."

"Non—non!" She was giggling now —."

"Tell me, then, *what are the principal parts of speech?*"

"Spee-eech? Spee-eech?" She groped. "— pa-ar-launce —?" thinking hard of those brief wrestlings with English vocabulary she had had with the nuns¹⁸ from St. Albert.

"Well, there you are," thought Tom, "and Daniel thinking he's teaching her our English language."

"You'd better go back to your fishing," Tom said loftily, "if you expect to catch a feed for supper. The Reverend Newbridge will be hungry when he gets back." Tom picked up his shovel again. He could have told her about Helene—all those letters that came three and four at a time—for which Daniel lived, but a sense of honour forbade. It was true that Daniel would be hungry, and it was so wonderfully good for him on returning from long rides these past weeks to have food prepared, kitchen scrubbed and a bowl of milk on the table to drink. Daniel blessed that day of spring which had brought them across the river to the Indian Sun and Thirst dances the day they had met Miette.

Not only had she brought a fine big fish the following day, but had continued to bring them with increasing regularity. She also brought with her fresh cow's milk, and more recently delicious wild berries. Then they discovered that Miette solved that very vexing problem of all bachelors in frontier life, by doing their necessary laundering. Daniel was very grateful for the girl's services, and the pile of coins in Miette's hiding hole on the Garneau hill grew taller.

It had been a very warm spring and thereafter had followed rains and even snows in May. But the snow had not kept Miette from coming to the Hermitage. Daniel was shocked on finding her in their kitchen that stormy day the end of May, shivering wet, with moccasins soaked. Then and there he had decided to buy her a warmer shawl and adequate footwear upon his next call to the fort trading post. This he had forthwith done. With his gift Miette had been uncommonly pleased, and though he never saw the boots worn, she was never thereafter without the shawl. Its brilliant magenta colouring surprisingly enhanced her dusky young beauty. For Miette had inherited both the loveliness of her Indian princess mother, as well as a certain grace of form belonging to her aristocratic ancestors, the de Berriotts.

The early summer found them all enthusiastically at work. The untidiness around their new house that building leaves;

they cleared away. They planted lilac shrubs the vicar had sent, and did other garden planting. Tom had cut down trees in the ravine and affixed them to Christopher with ropes. These were dragged half-way up the slope of the ravine, where now a fine new log stable stood. Daniel still felt the need of a small chapel with a library room. Also, he began to realize that he would need to have a church in the village, too. Already he had found it expedient to prevail upon the villagers for permission to hold Sunday services in their homes. Next Sunday he was to hold church service in John Walter's house. He had his sermons to write—his father to write—his solicitor, too, for more funds—and Helene's last letters to answer. The Reverend Daniel Newbridge found his time well filled.

* * * * *

Daniel was at his home-made desk, writing. It was Saturday and his sermon was ready. He was jubilant. Malcolm Gore, the former steward of the fort, had offered him a six-acre piece of land for his proposed new church. His claim lay close to the village settlement. Though he had meant this for a gift, Daniel had written out an elaborate form of contract and paid the generous donor the sum of one guinea—to make the church ownership legal and binding.

Now he was writing Helene. To Helene he told all—his hopes, his disappointments, his fears—his love. Yes, it was *love* now—no longer friendship, that he felt for Helene. The great distance between them; the long waits for word from each other; the aching loneliness of the long nights of the past winter, had brought him to thinking love of Helene.

Daniel's letter ran thus: "*I wish, dearest Helene, you could see how nicely all is coming along in our garden. A month ago it was just moist, bare earth, covered with sparse prairie grass, with here and there a cluster of crocuses growing. These, by the way, are a charming species of native flora, with a*

flowering petal, violet blue, as your eyes. Tomison and I, when breaking the soil, lifted each crocus plant to a flower bed close to my study, where ——."

A shadow darkened the doorway that led to the garden in front. Daniel guessed it was Tom and went on writing. The figure remained motionless, seemingly waiting. Impatient at being disturbed, Daniel looked up from his page and saw Miette standing there strangely still, staring at him fixedly.

There was something unusual in all this—Miette heretofore had entered only by the back door to the kitchen. It was Saturday, too, the day she more often occupied herself as nursemaid in the village. He nodded pleasantly and dipped his pen, thinking she would leave—a forlorn hope, however. After writing on a few more moments he gave up, put the pen down.

"Miette" (he, too, had lapsed into the pronunciation 'Mayetta'), "what is it you wish?" His tone expressed a wearied resignation.

The girl appeared inarticulate for a moment and then words came, strangled and incoherent—in disjointed, jerking sentences. She crept down beside Daniel, who recoiled as a man will from hysterical manifestation. This was a new Miette to him—not the shy, soft-voiced girl he knew, but an over-wrought, stormy-faced creature of passionate utterances. Something was greatly amiss—that much was certain, though the account given, partly in French, then in English, with an interspersing of guttural, angry Cree, was not intelligible to the Reverend Daniel. He heard vague fragments of "Robaire," Lena Borgereau, the Archambault infant, and christenings, ending always with the lady who "cry like she die." Miette herself was crying now, too, in gasping sobs that racked her.

"Miette, be quiet," said Daniel with some severity—"and answer me this, is the lady who cried so badly the mother of your Robert?"

Miette nodded, her hands pressed to her face.

"Is either one ill or dying?"

"Non, non!"

". . . Lena, or that other child?"

"Non, non, non!" Miette jerked out, this time sounding almost regretful.

"Well, then, why is *anyone* crying as though they're dying?" Daniel was becoming exasperated.

Miette's wailing began afresh. Only by persistent questioning was the full story of her grief revealed.

It began with Lena. Lena had taunted her because Robert, a year old, had never been christened. On the other hand, her own charge, the Archambault infant, had been duly christened in all the splendour and magnificence of silks, ruchings, laces and embroideries. It had galled Miette. She knew the Reverend Father of their little chapel would not deny Robert a christening, though her precious "Robaire" lacked the costly robes and fineries of the affluent Archambaults. So Miette, in a fervour of love and compassion for her charge, had taken Robert to the priest herself for christening.

The Reverend Daniel Newbridge was astounded. He knew a new priest had come to the village recently, who wouldn't know Miette.

"And you gave the proper name?"

"'Robaire'—yes!"

"With his other name, too?"

Here the girl wavered. At the time she could not remember the name of "Stinson," so strange to her ears, so she had quickly supplied the only name to which she had a true and legal right—"de Berriott."

At this a slight tremor overwent the face of the young Anglican minister.

"And upon returning you *told* the Stinsons this? The thing was incredible!"

"Yes, yes!"

It was at this point that the lady had cried 'like she die' to her husband, and collapsed on the sofa.

". . . and then?"

"Man come in room, 'vite-vitel' "

"He said ——?"

"He stamp, angry at me—say: 'Git!'"

It was all quite understandable to Daniel now.

Poor Miette! Devastated, blundering so badly because of her overwhelming love for the baby! He put his hand upon her bowed head and spoke soothingly. Yes, he would do what he could to reinstate her with the Stinsons—attend to the rechristening of Robert. The girl's head drooped, pressed against his knee, then slid up slowly to his shoulder and rested there. Daniel's arms enfolded her tenderly. Miette was a sweet child and now badly hurt. He comforted her fear that Robert had been harmed in any way by her—in fact—wouldn't the child be doubly blessed by a dual christening?¹⁴

It was now Miette's turn to ask why the lady had cried 'like she die,' but she could only close her adoring eyes and sigh with deep content. Hereupon another shadow darkened the door, though only briefly, that must have been Tom's. The enormity of the inference of that hasty retreat was instantly borne upon Daniel. He rose and thrust Miette away from him, almost roughly. "Now you must go at once, Miette," he said, upon seeing her reluctance to leave.

He led her to the doorway and down the path to the little fence gate of the flourishing new garden. He saw her turn about again and again to look back at him as she walked down the pathway that led down to the ravine and back to the village.

Then Daniel went on with his interrupted writing: ——"*As for being in danger because of the savagery of the Indians, I can assure you, dear Helene, I am quite safe—some of their devotion to me is truly quite touching ——.*"

He glanced below where Miette had just knelt beside him and saw a small object lying on the floor. Daniel picked it up and studied it carefully, the little wooden Prie Dieu she had carved herself from juniper root. The halo about the sacred child's head was strangely likened to the ruche upon the bonnet of the Archambault baby.



Chapter Seven

Rescued From The River Flood

JUNE slipped into July with long bright days of heat. Often these ended in severe thunderstorms and a torrential down-pour. The river remained turbid and high. Tom's grizzly stood on a narrow clay ledge, squeezed against the cliff of the embankment. One day he and Daniel carried it to a small gulch higher up for greater safety. Though neither had

thought to do more sluicing after, Tom and Miette discovered one day that the higher bed also yielded gold. This surprising find pleased Daniel no end. He took it as a special omen as help from Above for that building fund of their new church. The new church on Gore's land, he decided, should be built from shared contribution of the settlers themselves. Already he had secured a smith, who had promised to place a stove and necessary pipes. Many times in the past weeks he had driven great distances in the buckboard to find new members for his flock, more often with discouraging results. He would reach an isolated log shack after meandering many miles in search of it from a neighbour's scanty description; only to find no person about the bare, mean premises—its occupant away, freighting¹ for a Company outfit, or hauling out wood. But he kept doggedly on; he could not bear to tell Helene that he found his task too difficult, that he had given up—failed.

Timberwood, he found, was the great bone of contention in the land. The settlers prized the tall, straight firs for building purposes, and these were chosen and cut as soon as discovered nearby. Though no one knew just where his rightful claim on wood was, there was always a fight made for the better stand.

Daniel's heart was sick at seeing the wanton destruction of fine trees² in their nearby ravine one day by a party of bushmen—mostly breeds—he recognized the Borgereau men among them. When he had protested, they had laughed at him—laughed because he had told them in all sincerity that he had wished them to remain only for their beauty. Now he needed good timber for his church.

John Walter had advised him of a splendid stand on the island near Fort Saskatchewan. The police garrison, so near at hand, would afford protection against theft after cutting. Daniel and Tom rowed down stream in their small boat the several miles to the island. It was decided to order their cutting at once. The wood was to be piled and readied for hauling upstream to Fort Edmonton by sled after the freeze-up.

Daniel knew that the lumbering crew was already started on the work. He had seen the smoke plume from their encampment when making his visit to the policemen.

This day had been very hot and the night found Daniel sleepless. The air was close in his upstairs room. At intervals, heat lightning flickered—cut through the darkness. His mind was racing with his plans about the building. This very day he had received a serious set-back. One of his parishioners, from whom he had anticipated a generous donation, had received him coldly, and quite curtly refused help. He still smarted from the ungraciousness of it. The *LeGrands*, with whom he enjoyed the pleasantest of relations! Theirs had been the first wedding ceremony for him to perform after his arrival in Edmonton. Their ranch house, which lay almost immediately across the river from the "Hermitage," was a place where he had often gone during the winter, chatted over a cup of tea in the congenial atmosphere of home.

Daniel, fuming over the injustice of the slight, made a strong effort to put it out of his mind. He'd never get to sleep thinking out a solution.

Outside a wind was rising; he heard a spatter of rain on the roof and a few sharp hits from hailstones. Daniel thought at once of the garden. Yet there was nothing one could do. If it hailed, it hailed, and every plant in the garden would be flattened—beaten in the ground. His lovely garden! Miette had patiently weeded it that very day in the hot sun. He listened anxiously. A few more "spat, spats" and then it ceased. Sleep, though, was even further away. Miette! He hadn't been to see the Stinsons yet, to intercede on her behalf. It was a delicate situation, a difficult mission to undertake—Daniel quailed at the prospect. He had been rash in giving his promise that day.

And Tom! Tom had become noticeably distant and taciturn since he came upon that scene in the study. If he had thought to offer some explanation later, this attitude on Tom's part forbade it. Should I be put about by superiority in a youngster

of seventeen?—Daniel asked himself in seething indignation. Perhaps he thinks I'm lazy, too—leaving so much of the labour to him—while I stay at my desk. Daniel resolved to leave extra early on the morrow and attend to the stone gathering for the church foundation himself. He realized, with a sudden pang, that Tom's hopes for opportunities for further study here had proved nil.

He fell into an uneasy sleep. Later he was irritatingly dragged from slumber by the constant jarring noise of an unlatched door. How many times had he told Tom to fasten the bolt on the outside of that stable door for the night! And he had neglected to do it again! So now the fresh morning wind toyed with the door, swinging it lazily back and forth with high complaining creaks and groans; when a sudden gust would fling it wide with a resultant bang against the stable wall.

It was already light—the sun was up. Daniel looked at his timepiece; nearly four o'clock. "Tom!" he called towards the next room, "go out and fasten that cursed door!"

No reply came from Tom. He slept like a dormouse anyway. Thinking harsh things, Daniel drew on some outer garments to go out and fasten the door himself.

The smell of moist growing earth in the morning air came sweet upon his nostrils as he came outdoors and walked down the path to the stable. The stable was built on the slope of the ravine for weather protection and easier access to the water for Christopher. He could hear the rushing sounds of the creek below, that was now in full flood. As he came close upon the barn a quick breeze again swung the door open wide, permitting a glimpse within. What Daniel there beheld rooted him to the spot. For, lying on the hay nearby the stall, was Miette, fast asleep. Her nude young form lay gloriously outstretched upon her shawl with that sinuous grace of a young animal given over in complete abandonment to sleep. The early sun's rays cast a warm glow upon the lovely outflung limbs, round, distended breasts and long scattered hair of the sleeping girl.

From this vision, so rare as to inspire the brush of a master artist, Daniel Newbridge recoiled and retreated in full haste.

He was immeasurably shocked. Heretofore, the female form from ankle to chin had always met his eye well overlaid with clothing of various colour, fit and design. His intimate home life had not offered another view than this. Daniel's mother had died in his infancy, his only sister, much older than himself, had gone from home in his early childhood. Naturally, he had seen many representations of the nude in art galleries. Once in the Academy gallery, years ago, he had been studying one of these with the open curiosity of a boy, when in turning he had surprised a look of such scathing contempt on the face of an elderly governess that, thereafter, the whole field of art had become for him something slightly tinged with the colour of sin—his reasoning notwithstanding. But this nude figure he had just seen was not merely an impersonal painting or form of sculpture—this was a real woman in the flesh—one he knew—in fact—Miette!

As he came back to the house he felt a horrible sense of shame and anger. Anger for Miette. Thoughts were in tumult; was this the first night she had slept there? No! That *door*—so often left unlatched in recent weeks! It could not be fastened from within. Did Tom know? Tom should have told of it then—others *did* know, of that he was now certain—Agnes LeGrand's hostile attitude——! Her husband's quizzical looks—maddening! Tom had told him of the Metis encamping a few miles beyond the Hermitage—the Borgereaus among them—according to their nomadic custom in the berry-picking season. Their men were logging further down-stream on the island. *These people would know* that Miette had stayed at the Hermitage.

Daniel sat at his desk—saw the litter of notes and letters strewn before him, plans of the new church—notes on sermons—letters—letters to Helene—*Helene!* What if she were told? Daniel's head sank despairingly between his folded arms on the desk. He realized that he wanted Helene now—wanted her more than he had ever wanted anything yet.

After a while Daniel crept back to his room upstairs. He had no wish to waken Tom now.

And Tom, hearing that soft tread upon the stairs, wakened suddenly, as people will from the sounds of stealth, and knowing where the girl was, writhed with the suffering thoughts of one who finds that his idol has feet of clay.

* * * * *

Daniel awoke much later to find that Tom had Christopher all harnessed and readied for their start. He had to hurry his breakfast since he had overslept, and was not in the best of advantage to make the speech he had planned for Tomison that morning. There was no sign of Miette anywhere. For that matter, there never had been—in the mornings.

Tom nodded in a brief acquiescence at the order to stay at the Hermitage instead of accompanying him, and his eyes simply blazed with wrath at Daniel's stammering of: "Tomison, I have reason to believe—I mean, Miette has been staying —." He cleared his throat to begin again, when Tom abruptly dropped his hand from Christopher's bridle, turned on his heel and walked away. Christopher, impatient from long standing, started off at once.

There was nothing for it but to drive off in the rig. That was all he could do with Tom for the present, anyway.

The rainstorm of the night had cooled the air, the day was fine. All that day Daniel wrought with almost savage zeal. The heavy lifts and placing of stones was somehow healing to his annoyed spirit and perplexed mind.

That evening he reached home at sunset, feeling much better for his long day of strenuous physical labour, though he was spent—every muscle in his body ached.

In their kitchen he found his meal ready as usual. He was grateful and ate, all the while thinking ruefully that it had been prepared by either Miette or Tom. He drank the milk.

a glass of water, too, and was still thirsty at the end of the meal. Looking for the buckets, where they kept their supply of drinking water, he saw they were not in their place upon the table. He went out to walk down to the creek. From below he heard their voices, laughing and gay. Then he saw them, each with a full bucket, coming up the slope—racing each other for the top. Tom gained a little and then stopped half way up, completely winded. Miette rested, too. How pretty, her laughing face above that brilliant shawl! *That shawl*, which, Daniel now realized, had served to incriminate him more. That fine magenta shawl of wool, that many Indian people had cast covetous eyes upon, as it lay for long upon the trade store shelf—too costly to buy.

Miette bent over, putting her lips to the water bucket, and drank with gusto. Then she raised her head and with an impish gesture dipped her hand in the pail and dashed a spray of water at Tom. “Kespool!” she cried mockingly.

Tom dodged—dipped in his own bucket and retaliated in like manner. “Kes-poo yourself!” he answered jovially, and grabbed up his bucket to continue the race uphill. Then all at once it came over Daniel: *Tom! Of course!* He’s enamoured with the girl—he’s jealous of me. *Now* he’s happy. He’s had her companionship all day—not only this day, but many other days before. He’s had her near about, with her mischievous smiles—provocative eyes—and light, bewitching figure. Yes, *I would* see that now, curse it ALL!

They saw him then, and both slowed their pace at the set sternness of his face.

Daniel found himself speaking in a voice unnecessarily harsh:

“Put the bucket down, Miette. You are to leave at once—go *home*, Miett!

” seeing her falter. “Do not come back, either—unless asked . . .”

Miette stood looking at him. Her mouth fell open in a bewildered astonishment.

"Go home, Miette!" Daniel repeated firmly, a little afraid of her hesitancy. The girl's fingers plucked at her shawl and one hand twisted down into her apron folds. Slowly, then, she walked away, fingering her hair and turning about to look at him, then taking a few more steps on and looking back again. She even smiled a little, shy, smile.

"God!" thought Daniel, "that *smile*—like Morley—(his dog at home was called 'Morley')—wagging his tail when I had ordered him back home—hoping for a reprieve!"

He stood and watched her go without moving—waited until he saw she was well on her way, then he went back into the house. Tom wasn't there. Tom, he felt sure, hated him quite heartily—and so do I—said Daniel grimly, *hate myself!*

He went to his desk, sat slumped over it with his head in his hands, too tired to write—"Go home, Miette—go home, Morley—go home, Miette—go home, Morley"

Daniel ran his fingers up into his hair—tightened them. He had done precisely as he should. He was wretchedly unhappy.



For three long days it rained continually in veritable torrents, with clouds hanging dark and low. Then the sun came out to brighten everything and atone for everyone's dismal hours of forced inactivity indoors. The new day saw the bush men resuming the tree cutting on the island; Indian women busily plucking berries on the river slopes, hanging their soggy blankets and garments out to dry—saw the Reverend Daniel Newbridge and his boy helper, Tomison, making an early start on the trail towards Ste. Anne's; and Miette once more fishing by the river.

Mother Jeanette had accepted her return to the encampment with stoic indifference—though secretly she was glad. She had missed Miette's help with her youngest baby and missed her daily fish catch, too. The men provided none.

They took their work-pay into the village settlement and there got themselves whiskey.

The river here was not the river Miette knew so well. The water was very high. There was no flat clay bank to sit upon—so she perched herself amongst some bushes and trees half way up the embankment and held out her fish pole. All day she watched the swirling, eddying current in mid-river carry strange-looking objects downstream. Great tangled masses of uprooted trees—carcasses of deer, antelope and buffalo rolled over and over while speeding downstream. A huge antlered moose, horribly mangled and twisted, sprawled across broken spruces. Once, glancing down at her feet, she saw that a small drowned animal had been washed ashore, the like of which she had never before seen. It was neither rat, beaver, rabbit or gopher. Miette drew the little Rocky Mountain pica from the river and tied it to a tree branch above her. If she caught no more fish, Jeanette might want it for eating. The dogs were hungry, too.

At the end of her whole day of fishing she was a little ashamed to bring her meagre catch to Jeanette. Jeanette showed marked displeasure. She took up a sharp knife to fillet the three small fish for supper. The dogs had to be beaten away.

Miette thought to go back to get the little animal that was in the tree. It would be nicely dry by this time from the sun. Then she forgot it until long after she was abed for the night. She slept again in the tepee with Natale, Therese, Madeleine and little André. Lena was 'working out' in the village. Miette slept badly among the restive children and clammy blankets. She sorely missed the dry, sheltering warmth of hay and Christopher's stable. Sleepless, she got up and went out to fetch the funny little blunt-nosed beast.

The night was without a moon—gropingly she made her way down to her cluster of trees. Her feet suddenly struck water with a splash—she nearly lost balance and fell headlong into the river. *The water had come up several feet in a few*

hours! Only the tops of trees were dimly visible below her where she had placed her find that afternoon.

She ran back to the tepee. "Natale! Natale!" She shook her. "Wake up! the river water is getting high, *high*—it drowns all!"

Natale grunted and flung her arms up as one who fights against being wakened. Suddenly Miette remembered Christopher, shut in his stable—the stable that stood at the same low level as those submerged trees below.

Swift as her thought, Miette ran out into the night, across the prairie uplands towards the Hermitage. Her fear hastening her, Miette's fleet moccasined feet gained the Hermitage hill within the hour. She ran across it, back of the house, to see where the stable was below. The flood waters had backed high into the ravine and the stable stood surrounded in water. Miette thought to rouse the men inside the house at once. She shouted and pounded at both doors. There was no answer. The doors were locked, the upper windows closed. She retraced her way back to the stable—wound her skirt up high above her knees and waded through water to the door. It, too, was locked securely with a chain. Daniel Newbridge had resorted to these means for solving a problem of trespassing. She stood still and listened for some sounds of the horse within. There were none. Neither was the rig "Columbus" anywhere to be seen. They were all gone.

Miette walked out of the dark, chilling waters up the sloping bank and thought next of Tom's grizzly. It stood in a break of the bank in front of the house. That last evening they were going to remove the piece of linen resting on the grizzly's blanket, with its precious final sifting, when she had been ordered to stay away.

Tom had told her that the "clean-up" would only be done in her presence—she, who was his "working" partner. Tom was honourable and generous. If still there, she could rescue the gold dust from the flooding waters.

Her eyes were becoming more accustomed to the darkness. She found the top of the gulch easily and knelt to slip down the embankment. As she eased herself over the rim of the knoll she saw that the grizzly, placed on the extreme outer edge of the lower bank, was already being washed by the water. She had come just in time. The ground just below her was, fortunately, still above the river level. As she started to slide down the bank a dark shape moved by the grizzly. Miette clutched the bank in an awful terror, tried in vain to stay her further descent. The figure uncoiled from behind the dredging frame and came towards her. Miette shrieked out. She tried to scramble upwards, the gravelly ground loosening beneath her clutching hands. Just as she gained some headway, her ankle was enclosed in a vise-like grip. Her struggles to kick free were useless. She was dragged down into the gulch clawing and snarling like a cat. She recognized her assailant. Jean! Brutally drunk and merciless.

"Stealer!" screamed Miette, snatching at the linen sack he was holding. She kept on striking out frantically before her to ward him off.

Jean caught one of the blows and grasped her wrist.

"You ——," he called a Cree word of bestial obscenity, "—— dog-bitch!" (he yelped over a searing scratch on his face), "—— and your over-washed Engleesh padre!" he snarled out savagely.

The fight went on in desperate intensity; the girl's quickness often telling over ungainly masculine strength. Miette struggled with all her might to free his grip upon her wrist. In her own hand was clenched the stolen gold. Her sharp teeth bit into flesh until jaws pained—her head was ruthlessly twisted backward by a grasp on her hair.

All the while she kept up an inhuman yowl of anger that became more and more despairing as Jean finally caught her other wrist—pinned both behind her together in his one hand. His terrible strength had won. He tripped her then, and fell over with her.

Miette's screams were horrible. Jean's free hand came to her throat—closed upon it.

Her screaming stopped, became gasps. She struggled agonizingly to regain breath. Then some blind instinct gave her one last defence. As a captured wild thing simulates death, so the girl's body became entirely inert. The strangling grip on throat and wrists was at once released. In that instant Miette's arm shot up with the speed of lightning, struck a deadly blow with clenched knuckles at the side of Jean's head. A short, gasping groan escaped him, as his huge body slumped over in a dead weight, face forward in the sand. The girl pushed those terrible murderous arms from her with all her remaining strength, dragged herself up and staggered to her feet.

She was free!

With throat and temples throbbing painfully, distended eyeballs aching, she reached out blindly for a way to escape. By some miraculous power she gained the hilltop—ran. Whither? Already she heard sounds of a revived Jean behind her. He would overtake her—catch her—long before she reached the camp. Safety lay not there nor anywhere! He was going to choke her—kill her!

In terrified panic she turned towards the raging river at her right—cowered in hiding beneath some bushes on the bank—tried to tell herself that it was only Jean, drunk. Jean, who had sometimes been good to her, helped her with loads, called her his little "chicken face." Then she heard his footsteps coming nearer and nearer, thrashing the brush—he was calling her name—cursing madly in frustrated anger. Her panic renewed, a frenzy seized her. A little below, in the dark backwash, some logs still held together by their drag rope, bumped and bobbed in the undulating water. The girl crashed down to these, dropped through overhanging tree branches, and flung herself headlong upon the logs. They dipped with the impact, rode out in a wide, lazy arc from an ensnaring willow branch; a projecting bit of flotsam caught

an end log, whirled all about once, and then they were drawn into the current of the mighty river.

Miette was drenched by cold, icy water. She clung like a limpet to the ropes that held her makeshift raft only loosely together. A new terror, a new enemy, now held her, that made an instant submission to will. The flood was carrying her swiftly away and she was resistless, powerless in its grasp. She could not see the far-away banks. All around she could hear the "thoomp—boomp" of great logs striking each other as they tore down the flooding river. They struck her raft of logs, tipped it perilously or tossed it violently aside. Once a great heavy one ripped off an end log—leaving her only three to hold upon. These spread out from time to time, fanwise, from the holding rope. When she made an effort to raise herself they up-ended and submerged, bringing her up from the water choking and gasping, with arms desperately clasped about logs and rope. She lay more quietly after that, exhaustion overcoming her.

She said a prayer—an Indian supplication to the Spirit of the Waters. And another. She remembered them all from childhood and Granny. Sleepiness and numbness came over her. No longer was she much afraid. The small drenched figure lay still and outstretched upon the logs, with arms holding fast to the slippery ropes. Relentlessly the swift dark waters were carrying her on and on. The river that she and Granny loved and knew so well was taking her to itself—it now possessed her. She thought no more. The black night enfolded her senses.

Mercifully, a sudden sharp jerk roused her from a long stupor. Her eyes flew open, peered into the darkness about. She saw that a tree branch extending from an embankment had snagged one of her raft logs. The remaining two, impelled by the current, were straining at the ropes beneath her. Only a few feet away was a jutting piece of ground—the island! Now she could see the dim shapes of the tents upon it—the tents of the logging men. Miette raised herself by a mighty

effort, and was plunged into the shallow water. She reached a tent—fell into the doorway and remembered no more.

* * * * *

Natale stood in the Hermitage kitchen and her brows were thunderous.

Both Daniel and Tom heard her:

"You come—M'Yette ask—she *sick* ——."

They murmured their shocked surprise.

"She *die*," added Natale with finality, who never minced matters.

Then she left them.

Tom had at once gone out to harness Christopher. They were going to the village first to get the doctor there.

As there wasn't room on "Columbus" for three, the doctor followed them in his own rig, though all arrived together on the ferry to go across to the south bank of the river; for the Metis camp was moved shortly after the flood waters had subsided. They had pitched their new camp on high ground beyond Garneau's hill, where was a tiny clear lake.⁴

Though it was almost a month since that night when the flood waters filled the valley, there were still signs of it to be seen. Walter's house had a pale coat of tawny grey silt upon its fresh log walls, that reached well nigh to the top. His booms filled with logs were all swept away. The half-breed shacks, nestled about Mill Creek, had lost their roofs of mud—they gaped widely open to the heavens. The willows along the banks leant bedraggled upon the ground, heavy and dispirited.

Tom heard Daniel speaking of it to Muchias and the ferry man. He was assuming that interest and enthusiasm in speech that he always adopted when he had an uneasy mind. Tom knew he was profoundly anxious over Miette.

"So you watched the ferry all night, Muchias? . . . ropes? You fastened, held it, with ropes? — Is *that* the post up there? We're all certainly much indebted to you, Muchias, I'm sure—we'd miss the ferry very much—yes—yes—very much indeed!" (In his best clerical manner).

"Glory!" Tom said to himself, "he can't stop!"

Had Daniel spoken of his troubled concern and feelings openly and honestly he could have learned much from the men on the ferry.

Muchias could have told him how Miette had lain in a pack cart, semi-conscious, a mere wraith of her former self, when the Borgereaus had ferried across to their new camp to the south. He could have recounted what Mac, the cook, had told him of Miette saving them all on the island—that night she had fallen across his feet half drowned. The men had only had time to lash some logs together, raft to the mainland, when a wall of water and logs had overswept the island, leaving only tree tops visible. Had the girl not aroused them when she did they might all have been drowned, as their boats had already been washed away, and they were all fast asleep.

He could have told more—how young Borgereau stayed from the home camp because of the girl's delirium. Indian people are superstitious about the delirious. But Muchias would discuss only topics others introduced. He answered questions—yes. Rarely did he ask.

So Daniel came upon the tepee encampment by the lake, knowing nothing of Miette's experiences since the evening he had so peremptorily ordered her off.

Jeanette came to them and took them to her tepee. The doctor entered with her. Daniel and Tom waited without, awkwardly. Tom saw that Daniel's face was pale and strained, and something of his old liking for Daniel returned to him then.

The two came out of the sick girl's tepee and Daniel stepped towards them. Tom held on to Christopher. Jeanette, with grieving, doleful face, was coming towards him. She thrust

a small, tightly squeezed lump of cloth upon him—"she leave you," the woman muttered low, and passed on hurriedly, crossing herself, leaving him holding it out in his hand, stiffly. Tom looked at the thing in his palm: the mangled and dirty fragment of one of Daniel's handkerchiefs, with the elegant monogram still recognizable, that had been used to catch the gold in the grizzly. Miette must have recovered it, then, before the flood waters swept everything from the gulch. He could feel the solidity of some gold dust inside. This was awful—he *didn't want it*.

The doctor was speaking to Daniel. "Well, my good friend, I've done the little I can—I'm always brought to these people too late. Go in, Newbridge, you can do more—you can pray for the poor girl."

Daniel stooped to go inside, and there he saw her. He caught his breath sharply. Upon a pallet lay the withered wreck of a girl that had once been Miette; with matted hair about a face of ghastly pallor; lips colourless and cracked; eyes deep sunken and partly closed. He sank to his knees beside her. He couldn't speak.

"Miettel!" he choked. "Oh! My poor Miettel!" The languid eyelids raised slowly at the sound of his voice. She seemed to listen, staring up where light came into the tepee.

Daniel, in kneeling posture beside her bed upon the ground, had thought to pray. He couldn't. He could only cry to her in his anguish: "Miette—*live*. Miette—come back—we want you so much—we need you —." He lifted her closed hand where it lay, oddly pale and delicate, upon the dark blanket covering; not the hand of Miette he knew, ruddy and thickened from outdoor labour. The fragile fingers moved, releasing a small flat object—the little pink shell she had worn about her neck. Daniel saw the pathetic little bauble upon his palm and heard her faintly whispered: "*Take*."

"Take—*take!*" Yes, he had always *taken* from Miette. Had he ever given? He had sent her home, *this home*, squalid and mean, to die like a dog! He had denied her his stable—and

he loved her—*loved Miette*—and Tom, too, loved her. There was never wrong in one being's love for another—he had been over mindful only of futile man-made conventions regarding it, and gossip that would damage himself.

"Miette," Daniel bent closer to make her hear, "you can *stay always—always*—we want you—we'll build a house for you, Miette—Tom and I—a white house—*stay*, Miette. Oh—help me—God —."

And Tom, hearing outside the horrible dry sobs of a tortured man, could bear it no longer.

He dropped the thing in his hand and ran and ran.

"A man," Tom gasped out, "should never, never, *never cry!*"

He sped across the prairie slopes that led back to the river. He was gulping and breathing out in long shuddering breaths that made weeping sounds. Then he, too, realized that he loved Wannah Miette, the Metis girl.

* * * * *

The doctor, returning to the ferry crossing, saw the fleeing Tom before him. "Now what the devil," he asked himself, "has possessed that boy, I wonder? Struck me as being a good, level-headed youngster, too—does things and doesn't talk much. I could do with a boy like that—to help me—tend to my horse, do my driving."

The young physician, lately come from Edinborough University, felt how helpless he was in combatting disease and pestilence lonehanded, without nurses, without hospitals, in so vast a territory.

Combatting *ignorance*, too—consider *those Indian people* moving a patient in a jolting cart who was just at the crisis of pneumonia! It was all so hopeless what he, or any doctor, could do here. He slapped the lines to urge on his horse. The nag leapt up, made a show of fast trotting for a brief spell,

knowing full well from past experience that his driver would soon sleep, leaving him his own choice of gait for the remainder of the journey.

The doctor⁵ was weary, as always. Yesterday he had driven far into the night, and he was busily engaged in his teaching⁶ of the settlement children this day, when Newbridge had called him away.

"Hopeless, helpless, hopeless, helpless; hopeless, helpless ——" jangled the harness across the tough hind quarters of the trotting horse. The driver took a bottle from his pocket, raised it to his lips, drank a long, deep draught with eyes closed, as one who swoons in the delight of his senses.

Perhaps his low, discouraged spirits might have received a better stimulus—a less destructive one, could he have foreseen the great modern hospital⁷ that would stand on the very ground he was upon, with hundreds of nurses, efficient in sanitary white, gliding through its long noiseless corridors; or, a little further on, the spacious laboratories of a great modern University, in which eager men of science would work all day, mayhap all night—tabulating—weighing—shaking little vials or test tubes before their eyes; then calculating, observing and measuring again, to a thousandth of a cubic centimetre; all for the benefit of human welfare.

But the jaded man, slumped over in his seat, heard only the song of the harness: 'Hopeless, helpless; hopeless, helpless —hopeless, helpless ——,' as he was jogged into a stupor.

* * * * *

(1) Miette was buried in a pine-wood coffin that the lumbermen fashioned for her. Upon it, they recessed the little Prie Dieu she had carved herself. The low-lying ground of the Indian graveyard was still curiously veined from the flood waters that had lain upon it, and the grasses were all raked to eastward with the river current, like a dog's hair licked one way. The

grave-house of Granny Saskatchewan was gone; a long depression showed where they had laid Paka to rest in the dead of winter, many years ago. For some time a high rounded mound showed where lay the grave of Miette, then it, too, became flattened, like the rest, and was covered with long-growing grasses.

Thrice since then flood waters have covered the graves, left the grasses pressed upon the ground. No one remembers—no one knows now, where lies the grave of Miette. There stands, hard by, a huge building⁸—wherein a gigantic wheel whirls speedily—silently—ceaselessly—making a bright shimmering globe before the eye. Every day, from towering wide funnels, dense smoke plumes belch up to the level of the river bluffs above, where the wind streams them out like a pointing finger to the North.

Each spring the river breaks free from its shackles of ice and the big blocks of white go racing around the bend where once there were the Indian graves.

People cannot remember them, people forget—people have work to do. There is much hustle and bustle, and wheels must go round fast and faster still—until even the heavens themselves sound in a deafening roar of motion.

But the river hears the chatter of ice floes, as they jostle and shoulder one another chummily down the stream: "We remember! Yes—*we remember!* 'Miette,' the river girl, a *fish catcher, that one!*"

Each spring a warm sun slants across the glistening crystals of the ice floes that linger along the river's banks and these crush and slip into the water in a long-drawn "SWOO-O-OOSH," that is like a sigh for the long-forgotten Metis girl who once did fish the river.



Chapter Eight

A Telegraph Message of Importance

THE woman swayed drunkenly from side to side with every lurch of the cart. She was slumped over amid their heaped possessions—hers and Jim's—and her eyes were heavy with the stupor of fatigue.

"Cree—ee—ee—ay — cree—ee—aw—yaw—cree—ee—ay—yaik, cree—ee—ee—aw—yaw," went on and on endlessly through

cool evening air; the screeching protest of straining wheels of wood—wooden wheels against wooden axles warmed to heat at the end of the day.

Cree—EEK! Crow—awk—AWK! A hole! A gopher hole. It threw the woman in the cart sharply against the rails, rudely rousing her. Time was when she had sat alert, and being watchful, braced herself smartly for every bump on the trail, but that was at the beginning of the journey,¹ long ago; many, many days ago—weeks ago—even months —.

How novel she had found it at the start! Winnipeg² and the prairie near about dotted with hundreds of tents. And carts—carts everywhere; some so newly made they still smelled of green timber. When all were readied for their line-up to make the long trek west, she had counted them—up to sixty. And their noise! Like a hungry horde of greedy, squealing pigs! Downright comical it had seemed, making her want to laugh.

Confusion prevailed, what with horses, cows, calves and colts being chased in line. Only the oxen, harnessed to the 'Red River squealers,' seemed tractable and steady. They switched their long curly-ended tails in a lordly disdain. Horses shied at the covered wagons that billowed out and roared to the wind. In the 'pull out'³ that followed, it was the green horses who gave the most trouble. They kept too fast a pace—even for the "wire wagons." The men with the "wire wagons" were always to be far ahead, so that by night fall the caravan could catch up to their working crews and they could make camp together. Thus, long before dawn, Jim would go with the men on horseback to string that telegraph⁴ wire. From tree to tree they fastened it, and where there were no trees, they put up poles. Always they burned the grass around these to protect them from chance prairie fires. Often, on those long weary miles, the sweet smell of burning buffalo grass was in her nostrils.

Harriet, staring dully ahead, realized now that she had not smelled the smoke of burning grass for several weeks. They

had been going through rolling timbered country as they neared their destination. The 'Beaver' Lake and 'Beaver' Hill country, Jim called it. They were getting closer, he said, to the river and Edmonton. Then they'd "hook'er up." He meant the telegraph machine. But would they ever get there? What if they had a snow fall? Nights were already bitter. It was nearing November. It had taken them much longer to make this trek because of the telegraph wire. In the heat of July days they had left home and Ontario. First had come a long ride in a train, which had proved surprisingly wearisome, too, before it terminated at a place called Fargo—but it was nothing—nothing as compared to her present racking exhaustion.

"*Cree—aik, cree-aik, cree—aik,*" sang the carts. "Achel! Achel!" echoed Harriet, pressing a hand to her back. "Why couldn't they stop for camp?" Last night the men ahead had said they'd make camp in Edmonton tonight. It was getting dusk—she couldn't see anything like a settlement. "If Jim, concerned only with wiring only knew how my back ached!" moaned Harriet. The crisp voice of her sister back home in Barrie now came to her: "*Don't expect a man to care.*" Christine was married four years—she knew! It was Chris herself who urged her to go west with Jim, though. "Look at us," she had said, "now dad can't work the farm alone without Sam and mama is always cross with me and the children. Don't stay at home after you're married, whatever. Why, you'll be all right out there, if you don't have a baby." "*If you don't have a baby!*" Harriet put her head down between her hands—pressed them against her ears to shut out the sound of the carts. It gave her momentary relief. Her tired brain became more clear. Now that she was sure, she intended to tell Jim. Poor Jim!—at night always so spent from his long day of strenuous work and riding. Exhausted, he would fall asleep on their pallet of blankets long before she had a chance to talk to him. Her Jim! Really hardly more than a boy—only twenty-two—and making such a big effort to make their start

in life. "I haven't the heart," Harriet said to herself, "to worry him more. After we get there and are under a roof of some kind, then ——."

Isn't it grand of the man 'Walter' to ask us to live in his house? He said he had two upstairs rooms—an *upstairs* in the place!—so what matter if we don't have a house of our own until spring? He's a bachelor—needs a housekeeper—I'll make a comfortable home for him, too. Notice how the men grow very quiet when he says anything—they positively hang on his words—because he's the only one who knows the settlement—the life there. He said there was a doctor—a store and churches even. Just like Barrie. Why should I be afraid?

Just one covered wagon was still with them—the others had stopped at the settlements they passed through: Fort Pitt, Prince Albert Mission and Battleford. Jim couldn't be persuaded to settle in any other place but Edmonton. He said you had everything there! Gold in the river, coal in the valley, police protection near at hand—in case the Indians got bad, and now they'd have the telegraph. You'd get the news of the world just like at Barrie or Toronto. Jim certainly thought an awful lot of that telegraph!

The McKernans in the covered wagon behind were going to be neighbours of theirs. Harriet felt grateful for that and blessed their wagon which had given her shelter on those days that it had rained. Once rain had kept on for several days. Under the top the women had wrapped themselves in bed blankets and kept cozy, telling little Clara and Annie stories; right through the sounds of wind and rain, cows' lowing back of them, and the carts' squeaking ahead.

Looking back, Harriet decided there had been pleasant days amid the hardships, after all. She no longer minded sleeping under their tarpaulin, that old sail-piece Uncle Kenneth had given them; she didn't even mind or fear the Indians any more. Though the men were certainly keeping a sharp eye out for them. No—it was only ——. I wonder what I'll do if I'm all alone and get those jerking cramps Christine had? Will Mrs.

McKernan live near enough for me to walk to her place? Supposing there are Indians about? I'd be mighty glad even for an Indian woman then! She'd know—they get babies and don't have trouble about it. She tried to picture what Mrs. McKernan had heard from a brother-in-law, a North West Mounted Police constable, who came out west with the force: when trading with Indians in an encampment on their long trek, a constable who had been directed to fetch a piece of buffalo meat already bargained for, mistakenly entered the wrong tepee, and right there before him was an Indian woman, having her baby. She was on her knees, leaning over a box—and even before the policemen quitted the camp, less than a quarter hour later, they heard that papoose squawking!

Harriet pondered on this, comparing the incredible ease of this birth with Christine's account: "You'd swear your back was breaking right in two!" Her weary head dropped lower as she thought: "The Indian woman did better than our cow Nellie—we *helped* her." She dozed for a while. Her head kept nodding forward and then bobbing up with a jerk in quite a grotesque manner. Despite the discomfort of this, the poor young woman actually slept. She woke after a while to find a new scene about her and Jim on his horse riding alongside the carts. The sun's late bright rays shone on his sun-bleached hair and made his face appear redder than ever. He was eager about something.

"Rise up, Hattiepattie," he called. "See a rim of trees ahead? Below that's the river, and we're there!"

"O-o-oh," Harriet's mouth opened wide on a groaning yawn. She neither covered it nor closed her lips after. Just continued to gaze out on the horizon line ahead, where Jim had pointed, in a dreamy sort of trance. She was thinking: right there, a few miles ahead is that place—Fort Edmonton—the place we've been spoiling to reach all these long days—weeks—months; where Jim is going to build our log house—just to my liking; yet all I see is just another fringe of trees along the skyline, no different from many others we saw looming ahead

at the end of day. Usually that meant just one more river or stream to cross the following morning with a lot of difficulty and danger. But this time we will not need to cross in the morning; the carts' creaking will stop; we will stay; 'settle' beside the 'Saskatchewan,'¹⁵ that river the Crees named for its swift running current. In the thought was real relief. She closed her eyes once more.

Pretty soon she saw signs of their approaching a settlement; other trails forked off, crossing to the north and south. Deep ruts these had, from the wheels of carts and wagons, not just the narrow diggings of a dragging travois behind a pony. Then it seemed almost at once they had reached the rim of the river embankment. There the caravan was halted. Harriet felt too stiff and jaded to move. She waited. Then the word came that all but the "wiring" men and herself would remain above to make camp. Their own carts must go down the steep river bank, where was the Walter man's house on the flatlands below. There he had a corral and hay for the beasts, too.

Without giving her time to have a parting word with Mrs. McKernan, she felt the cart pitch forward on the winding incline of the river road. The oxen snorted in fearful indignation over the lunging weight of the carts behind, pressing them to a greater speed than was their wont after a long day's pull. With both hands clinging to the cart rails to keep from being pitched about, Harriet Hudson caught occasional glimpses between the trees across the river. The high palisades gave only a view of the roof of buildings enclosed. The whole appeared tidy, compact, self-contained and firmly closed against those without. "I don't like it, at all," said the despairing girl, not knowing how welcome the protection of those forbidding walls would one day be to her.

Far to the right of the fortification was a single small building, bravely breasting the wide immensity of prairie about. "Was that the church?" Suddenly she heard disturbance ahead, and rounding a turn in the trail she saw that they were being met, head on, by two equestrians—a woman and

a man, both splendidly mounted and smartly groomed. The man's horse, a spirited bay, reared aloft in its sudden fright at the encounter. It was difficult for the riders to persuade their nervous animals to pass the carts on the narrow trail. But both Agnes, and her husband, Alec LeGrand, with expert horsemanship, compelled them on. Like the thoroughbreds they were, the beasts tremblingly obeyed, sweeping tree brush to one side as they squeezed by the caravan.

As he came alongside her cart, Alec grinned pleasantly at Harriet. But Agnes merely nodded perfunctorily and looked on straight before her. Harriet still continued to stare about her stupidly. How strange, meeting these civilized people, well dressed, after three months of wilderness travel—then to receive a formal nod—as though your arrival were the merest casual incident! One might have been driving into Toronto with a surrey!

The LeGrands had just partaken of tea in the pleasant drawing room of the big house of the Hudson's Bay factor. Officers of the police force from Fort Saskatchewan had been there. It had proved a stimulating afternoon for the LeGrands. They were now bound for their ranch-homestead some miles east and northward, where the grazing was exceptional.

"The-ah—the-ah—*the-ah*—now!" said Agnes LeGrand, patting her mount, the quivering Bluebell.

"Tuckered—that woman, wasn't she?"

"No wondah! Sitting in a cart like a hawlf-breed! Why doesn't she ride like her menfolk do?" Agnes still had her moments of disdain.

"Wonder what these settlers are up to? River gold bro't 'em, I suspect."

"I hope you'ah right—better than having them mucking about with their scrubby stock—pigs, potatoes and picket fences! Their kind is the ruin of ou-ah rawnching country."

"A' cawse they have as much right to farm the land as the 'breeds'—y'know"—he drawled it a little.

They cantered on in silence for a short distance.

"I don't like 'em, though," said Alec after, shaking his head thoughtfully.

"Yes? What is that? Alec, what is it you don't like?" Her head turned in profile, interrogating him sharply.

LeGrand's grey eyes had been feasting upon her slim, straight back and Bluebell's graceful hind quarters—woman and horse—both good—both right, sound—satisfactory. He flashed his quick grin.

"'Pigs, potatoes n' picket fences!'" he blurted out.

Agnes reined in her horse.

"I siah, let's gallop this next bit ahead, shall we?"

Neck and neck they galloped across the gently rolling prairie at a fine clip—and were, for the time, supremely happy.



Harriet Hudson looked up at the log rafters from her bed in the upstairs room of the Walter's house and wished those men downstairs would stop their noise. There it was again! "Click—clicketty-click, clack—clacketty, clacketty, clack—clacketty ——" Jim was as daft about that telegraph instrument as the other men downstairs. She had thought when he had eaten supper, with hot tea made from such good river water, he'd want nothing but rest and bed. But no, he wanted to "help 'em set 'er up, try'er out," and so forth.

She had seen the big glass jars being filled with blue stone⁶ they'd brought in bags and other paraphernalia made ready.

One of the men, Alex. Taylor, was a telegrapher—knew how to run the thing. He had to listen ever so carefully to those clicking sounds. It was sounding away now: "clack, clacketty, clack, clack ——" Then a break—the men's voices murmuring things.

How good to have a real sound roof overhead again! Now let it rain or even snow—they'd be dry, snug and safe! And a bed, even though it was just ropes strung across a pole bunk

—it was blissful under her aching back—did she want to go down and see what was going on? Gracious, no! She wouldn't move from under her warm blankets for anything! Not to see six white elephants walking by!

Those halfbreed children were funny—standing around and peeping in!—that scrawny thin one with a French sounding name—'Natal-lay—Natal-lay Borgerah?' John Walter said their mother would do washing for us. But would they wash clean? If they do come tomorrow maybe I could give them some to do—I have so much on my hands!—but I don't care what happens now—we've made the trip—made the trip—got here—and now I'm tired—so tired—was it worse than I expected? Only once or twice—I wanted to die. That sight of loathsome wiggling masses on a cloth, strained from slough water! Water one either must drink or go thirsty. Even boiling does not remove the brackish taste. Ugh! it brings on my nausea to think of it! *"You're all right if you don't have a baby"*—the wise words of Chris. That's why there are ten men to every woman who come out to the Territories. A man would always be 'all right.' And they carry whiskey to put in their drinking water. It takes off the vile taste. That's why men out here prize their whiskey so much, she thought, more than anything else—they kill each other for it—give their lives for it. I haven't said prayers—but I'm too sleepy—too sleepy —.

It seemed hours later when she awoke in the darkness and knew Jim was sitting on the side of her bunk. The rope bed shook slightly from his movements as he undid his boots. One came off with a thump.

He seemed reluctant to undertake the other. Perhaps it was his tiredness or was he still wrapped up in thoughts over the telegraph instrument?

Jim must have sensed his young wife's wakefulness.

"Hattie," he whispered hoarsely, "you awake? Did you hear about the message?"

"Message?"

"——Clean from Ottawa. Clear's a bell! Think of it!"

Yes, he needed to think of it—himself—this result from the summer's endless unceasing toil with the wire. The lifting, bending, pulling of hard resisting metal, that often snapped back, struck one viciously, that caused his hands to bleed and burn from the straining effort to affix and fasten to trees and poles. He had been a climber of the trees. His long spare body gave him the advantage there. He could climb trees like a monkey now. He wrapped his flexible young limbs about them and clung like a python. "'Tree-foot' Jim" they called him.

Now this arduous work of his had been rewarded. The telegram from Ottawa was like the success crowning an individual accomplishment. The message was: "*Control of Northwest Mounted Police transferred from Department of Justice to that of Secretary of State.*"

"Department of Justice—Secretary of State!" Harriet repeated after her husband in dull wonderment.

"Jim! they're not going to take the 'Mounted' away from here?"

"Lord, no!" He attempted a brief explanation of the 'message.' Yes, it needed a bit of explaining—particularly for Harriet.

She tried to partake of his eager elation—failed.

"Was there nothing else? No *interesting* messages?"

"Well, there was quite a lot they didn't get, of course—but just you wait—wait until they ——."

"Will they keep the telegraph thing in this house?"

"Yeah—until the men from the fort help to take the wire across the river—some job it'll be—it might be spring before ——."

"And can we *send* messages, too?"

"Sure! What'd ya think we've been doing all this for, just to ——?"

"Jim! Oh, Jim!" Her hand reached out and ran over the arc of his back, felt the bony ridges along spine and ribs. "You're skinny!—thin as a string!" Something of yearning was in her voice, then with quick change of mood she gripped his arm and went on eagerly: "Jim, before they take the telegraph away next spring I want to send a message—just *one* message—back east"—the yearning returned—"to Ma, Chris, n' your Dad, a message that's interesting—that really matters—no 'Secretary of State' business! Like this," she added brightly: "'In Edmonton a new citizen arrived at the Hudson home today—a boy—Clifford James, Junior' "—she rolled out the syllables of the name, grandly, and felt Jim's form go stock still at hearing them. He wheeled about, quickly, to face her. Even in the blackness she knew he was gaping at her open mouthed, in shocked surprise.

Harriet's smothered giggle sounded in the darkness of the room.



Chapter Nine

The Power of the Pen

THAT telegraph Jim Hudson wrought so valiantly to bring out west was destined to do much more for the early settlers of Fort Edmonton than report a couple's first born to the folks "back east." For the telegraph messages from the east, called "bulletins," brought about the beginning of their first newspaper. This tiny sheet was, quite naturally, named "The Bulletin."

Tom Grant would never forget those months of waiting and excitement prior to the printing of the first edition. He and Daniel found themselves genuinely interested in its formation and purpose. Particularly Tom. They sat about the little trade store along with other villagers and the proprietor, who was to be the paper's¹ editor, and discussed the prospective "Bulletin" at length. "Yes, sir!" this ambitious young trader said to Tom, slapping a hand on his shoulder. "You're what we want—smart, educated fellows like you—to write articles for the paper and enlighten folks out here!" Tom glowed and tried hard not to reveal his pleased gratification over this remark.

The trader, or "bull freighter," had come to the village the year previous and had had newspaper experience—working in the composing room of a newspaper in Winnipeg. He and the telegrapher became partners for publishing the little weekly paper. With so admirable a combination, hopes ran high.

To Tom this new venture meant more than enjoying a weekly paper—it meant a return to studying—an incentive to read those precious books he had collected while at Oxford four years ago. Somehow the time had gone by without permitting him the fondly hoped for opportunity to peruse those fine treatises on religion and philosophy. Now he would read and study again. He was elated at the prospect. It even revived the hope of returning to Oxford University at some future time.

There came a day when the printing press arrived by oxtrain. A story was related of the mishap encountered while crossing the Saskatchewan east of Prince Albert. They had found the south branch in high water and in fording it an ox stumbled in a deep hole close to shore. The cart had capsized and the new press and several boxes of type, which had come the long way from Philadelphia, had fallen into the water. All were retrieved, however, with the exception of one parcel, that which contained the banner line: "The Bulletin." That

particular box of type was never brought back from the muddy river bed of the Saskatchewan.

Came the time for setting the type of Volume One, Number One of the paper. Leave it headless for the lack of the mere eleven letters? Never! The telegrapher sharpened his pocket knife—Tom found a bit of fine, even-grained wood, the broken piece from an old carriage tongue. It served admirably. What matter if the letters that were printed therefrom showed slight imperfections? Or that they were a shade varied? Volume One,² Number One of "The Bulletin" issued from that hand press with its name printed thereon in bold, big type, and all was well.

Now wherever the people foregathered—in church—homes or trading store—they discussed the news and 'editorials' that had appeared in their little newspaper. Tom found it faintly reminiscent of those lengthy discourses he'd had with fellow students at Oxford on social and political matters in the Junior Common Room. The mere thought of resuming them was warming.

The autumn of 1880 brought another notable event to the small hamlet, it brought Milly Newbridge, Daniel's sister, and a skilled nurse, to head their first hospital. She came at Daniel's earnest request. He wanted the people of his mission to have proper medical care when needed. Milly was grey-haired, dignified and efficient. She was charmed by the Hermitage site and enthusiastic over the log hospital building. It had been built just before she came and stood beside the Hermitage, its freshly peeled logs gleaming brightly in the late October sun.

She was to be quartered there in the hospital building. She eyed it all with wonder, exclaiming: "Delightful, Dan, dear, and so—very—very *different!*"

That winter they advertised the new hospital in the "Bulletin" and soon she had a few patients. Tom thought it pleasant to have so fine a woman with them, but it gave him much more to do: driving the patients home, going to town for the doctor. The reading he so wanted to do had to be done

far into the night. It puzzled Milly Newbridge. "I saw light at your window very late last night, Tom. Were you ill or just sleepless? Oh—*studying?* Gracious! Are you writing a book?—an article for 'Blackwoods?'" said Milly, naming a popular publication of the day. Tom flushed slightly—wouldn't admit that these late hours of reading were preliminary to the editorial he was to write for the "Bulletin", "to enlighten folks out here." He had already chosen the subject for one of these, one which had long lain within his mind. This argued that the paths of science and religion need not be considered as going diverse ways.

Wrote Tom: *The great man of science, John Dalton, propounding his theory of matter as being made of particles more minute than any conceivable dimension, from which solidity and extension are excluded, may be pointing to the very depository and vehicle of consciousness of the Supreme Intelligence Itself, and that being so, it would be safe amidst the destruction of its integuments: may connect the natural with the spiritual, the corrupt with the glorified body —*, so ran Tom's writing for the "Bulletin." It was not completed until late in winter, and then was duly submitted to the editor.

This always busy and harassed individual began reading the results of Tom's long labourings with the dialectics of Kant and an analysis of Paley's "Evidences of Christianity." A puzzled frown formed upon the reader's brow as he read on: — *the great powers of nature,—gravitation, magnetism, constantly present and exerting their influence on all bodies with which we are acquainted, are totally concealed from our senses—should it be too great a strain upon our thoughts to admit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial as being consciousness rather than the congeries of animal substance which forms a human body or the human brain —*. "Hmnmn," murmured the man, favouring the writer with a curious glance. "Well, now," he began hesitantly, "I tell you, Tom —." Here the telegrapher, having glanced over his partner's shoulder at the script, offered suspiciously: "It isn't *socialism*, is it, Tom?"

"It is just what you read there, gentlemen," answered Tom, who had been getting a little white around the mouth.

The editor laid the neatly written sheets down—continued: "You know how darn little space there is in the "Bulletin", Tom, and right now we've got to put something in about the railway route—something pretty damn strong—or there's no telling what those sons-a-guns at Ottawa might do to us—we've got to tell'm ——."

So Tom was advised to keep his contribution for some future issue, at least until the "sons-a-guns at Ottawa" had been told where the eastern railway to the Pacific should properly be routed.

"We won't have room for printing that Borgereau affair, either," said the co-editor, "anyway, it's damaging to the new family coming to live here."

He was referring to a misfortune which had befallen the Borgereaus a few weeks ago. A "landman" (which all purchasers of property were then called) from Dakota had made complaint of being threatened with a gun by Henri Borgereau when claiming the homesite he had previously purchased from the half-breed. Indeed, upon N.W.M.P. investigation, it was revealed that the Dakota settler held a legal receipt marked with Borgereau's "X" sign for payment of the Mill Creek home—said payment being the same gun which had been used against him. Tom had pleaded leniency for the big Metis and testified to Henri's inebriated condition at the time of the exchange of properties. The council of "Vigilantes," however, had overruled Tom's plea on the grounds that the newcomer would make the better citizen. The Borgereau family would be obliged to vacate their premises soon.

"But we need some help on the paper, Tom. We need advertisers. Go over to Norris and Carey's and the Feed Mill to see if they'll give us an 'ad'."

Tom left on this assignment he so cordially hated. Those rival trade-store men would ask of him: why should they advertize goods for sale which they never had difficulty in

selling? The question always left Tom tongue-tied and miserable. Though if he remained politely waiting long enough—one of the proprietors might relent—give him an advertisement describing “ladies’ Iceland wool fascinators—embroidered cambric chemises—new calico prints, etc.”—and he had looked forward to this working for a newspaper!

Thus chagrined and disillusioned, Tom Grant walked a homeward way one night of early spring. He faced a cold, biting wind from the north-east. Yesterday it had been balmy and mild, with mud deep upon the road he travelled. Then in the night the temperature had dropped; now the ice splintered hollowly beneath his feet. In his pocket he carried, crushed beneath his hand, still another script he had prepared for the “Bulletin,” only to find upon his arrival at the little log office the editor and trader gone^a on a freighting trip to Winnipeg; and everything in the press room upstairs quiet. The partner had gone, too, to his farm nearby the town.

In his vexatious mood, Tom trod harder than ever upon the brittle ice-encrusted ruts of the road: Would his material ever see print? Would the “Bulletin” ever be printed again? He told himself he cared not one iota! “*Ladies’ embroidered chemises—the sons-a-guns at Ottawa!*” His dejection increased. And Daniel hadn’t come with the rig to drive him home, either. He’d waited a long while in town for him. The sick man whom he was calling upon some miles west of town might have died! A still gloomier thought upon his mind—he trudged along, breasting the icy wind.

Presently he became aware of sounding footsteps ahead; he could hear the crackling of ice. Peering in the darkness before, he could see a moving black hooded shape. A chill went over him at sight of the spare, shrouded figure—the symbol of death. He called aloud—almost boisterously: “Hello, there!”

The figure turned, faltered a moment and stopped. Hurrying to overtake, he found himself looking into the narrow pale

face of a girl he knew—Natale! “Tom! *You!*” she breathed, and muttered something unintelligible to herself.

Was she praying? Where was she bound—alone on that dark lonely road? “Natale, where are you going?” asked Tom. Natale carried a small bundle of washing beneath her enveloping shawl—she was on her way to the Hudsons—where was a new infant—where she would serve in the household.

Tom tried, unsuccessfully, to relieve her of the wash bundle. “Non! Non! eet is not hard for me. I make myself strong with many burdens—I must—I must—and *learn* I must, too!—and pray always—always—then I shall be happy—I shall be like the sisters—a nun—Yes, someday I will be nun —.”

The plight of the Borgereau family came to Tom’s mind: “Where will you go to live, Natale—your family, your sisters and brothers, when you are forced to leave the house? I feel so very sorry —.”

“Poof! I shall go to the convent—and maman and the others? Papa and Jean must build another house for them. It will not smell old and sour!”

They walked on together for a while in silence with just the sound of the crackling ice to hear, though at times looking at the girl’s jutting, angular profile beside him, Tom thought he saw her lips moving.

They came in sight of the river, white with ice as yet—with some veinings of dark where the beginnings of open water showed. *And Natale was about to cross that river!* “Natale, it is dangerous crossing the river now—alone in the darkness. In the morning, I —.”

A strange low laugh came from the girl’s lips: “Oh, Tom, eet iss good of you to spik so of me —,” then suddenly he felt his shoulder clutched by her bony hand and fierce black eyes were searching his face. He shrank from the violence of her gesture, and heard her “Non, Tom, *look at me!*” Quite as suddenly, then, she released him—almost brusquely—and spoke: “I know, I know, you spik that word to Miette!—not

me, Natale—non—non!—but it will not matter, Tom, if the ice break and the water engulf me—I shall die soon, the sisters say. I shall pray and pray and if I die so—my hands will be clasped so —,” she crossed them over herself—“all fixed for my interment.” “Natale!” cried Tom, altogether shocked.

Natale did not stop—her low voice continued droning fanatical utterances as they tramped steadily ahead on the rough and frozen road.

Tom glanced at the frail, black-clad girl beside him, her pale profile etched sharply upon the dark, her whole figure thrust forward against the cold night wind like the winging forces of some avenging spirit. He forgot all self-consciousness—a feeling of dream-like unreality stole over him walking in that seemingly endless dark and hearing the mumbling intonations of the Metis girl, Natale: “At the convent I shall pray to learn. I must suffer much to learn—my eyes, they do not see well —.”

Tom was struck with pity: “You should have glasses—they will help—and soon the village is to have a school —. I will get you the glasses you need,” he added quickly. “Natale, I can teach you —.”

“Non, Tom, I will be strong—I can learn,” she spoke with greater firmness now. “I will pray and learn. Jean, he tink he ees strong—he fight wid his fist—but it is not strong for long—the good thoughts are strong, Tom. You have the good thoughts. You know the good words—they are strong for always—always! Forever!”

Poor Natale, trying to tell him in her halting speech of the greater endurance of spiritual truth! Fragments of the “Aeneid” came to his mind: “While rivers run into the sea, While heaven feeds the stars, ever shall Thy honour, Thy name and Thy praises *endure* —.”

They had come upon the ridge of the ravine where the road to the river crossing branched from that to the Hermitage. And then Natale was no longer beside him; she had disappeared like a wraith down into the deeps of the wooded ravine.

Natale, *alone*—going across that river with those fissures in the ice! Would the girl know a safe passage across them? Tom was filled with anxiety and foreboding in her behalf. Like the original propagators of the Faith, Natale was voluntarily subjecting herself to a life of fatigue, suffering and danger. Poor little Natale! *Poor Natale?* Who asked, wanted, no material thing?

Now he could see a light from an upper window of the Hermitage. Was it from his own room? Could Daniel be there? *"I saw a light in your window, Tom, were you ill or just sleepless? Studying?"* Would he go on now, burning the midnight oil? *"You are strong, Tom, you have the good thoughts—you know the good words—strong always!"*

An idea was born in his mind as decisive and clear cut as a command. *"Are you writing a book—an article for Blackwoods?"* The "editorial" now crushed in his pocket would be sent across the seas to the Blackwood's editors! And he would tell no one of it—not even Milly or Daniel—though, perhaps—yes, perhaps—he might tell Natale.

The wind had made a broad rift in the clouds in the sky above him. And there, shining steadily down, was the great star that had steered the course of so many a lonely traveller going North.

Higher up and farther east, Arcturus now emerged. The sky was clearing. Presently he thought he could trace the head of Hercules lower on the horizon. The man's eyes searched the firmament carefully to find other stars he knew. It seemed, after a while, that the whole firmament with its glowing constellations dipped down nearer and was, for a moment, very close to him.

* * * * *

Several months later a letter came for Tom from Blackwood's, London, addressed to "Tomison William Grant

Esquire, Fort Edmonton, in the North West Territories of Her Majesty's colony of Canada." The editors "regretted exceedingly" that no space could be given the material submitted them for Blackwood's weekly publication inasmuch as the columns of this edition were always fully assigned to regular contributing writers. However, these writers, being statesmen with heavy responsibilities, and often unduly pressed by external affairs, were occasionally obliged to substitute the writing of another whose name would remain strictly anonymous. The articles Tom had so kindly sent them were therefore being retained awaiting his pleasure in this regard. Details regarding remuneration for material accepted for publication under these specified terms followed.

Tom read the letter to its courteously worded close. After, he held it before him a long while without even seeing it. That night he replied with a brief acceptance of their offer.

Again months went by before Tom saw those writings printed. And strangely enough, when he did, they coincided with his first printed editorial appearing in the "Bulletin." He exulted over it all in secret—told no one.

The brothers Blackwood, with rare art and prudence in design, had attributed Tom's thesis upon Science and Religion to a political candidate who enjoyed their own favour but whose following, unfortunately, was decidedly insecure. They noted, thereafter, that this said candidate received a much wider following. They consequently utilized more of the writings of the anonymous contributor from the far northwest of Canada to bolster popularity of chosen candidates for political power—those men of noble rank or owners of great industries. These gentlemen, too often, were found to be overly occupied with their said expanding industries or hunting, as the case may have been, to offer the time and effort required to fill their assigned columns of "Blackwood's" magazine. It was also noted, by these sagacious London editors, one time of Edinburgh, that their chosen candidates became less preoccupied with their factories and "shooting boxes" as time

went by and became more interested in matters pertaining to the great truths in science and religion, often on the very subjects they were known to have so ably discussed in "Blackwood's" magazine. They were obliged to.

And thus did Tom Grant, orphan boy helper to an English Church missionary on the North Saskatchewan, prove the mighty power of the pen.



Chapter Ten

A Metis Girl Visits the New School

NATALE rested her wash bundle against the rough wood slabs of the fence, and sat herself down upon it. Looking between the slabs she could see that new school house.¹ Therese was inside that new building, learning—learning fast, letters, figures and the words—how to read and write them. Natale yearned to learn more, too—to be a nun, but she was sixteen now; too old to go to a school with children.

It was a November day and an uncommonly cold one, even for November. Natale's bony elbows held her shawl tightly clamped about her narrow form.

She kept looking at the building, admiring its many windows with their pointed eave caps, like those of a church a little way on. A large diamond-shaped sign was over the porticoed door. Natale could read the letters, "E.P.P.S.," that were written above it. Natale had spent some time on study, too, under the guidance of the nuns.² She could read all the letters there were, and write them, too. It was the English *words* she wanted to read, as Therese was learning to read now.

There came a sound of a bell from inside, and a horde of children spilled out from the door to the grounds.

Inside the fence she could see Therese with Marie and Paul Generoux and other children who were Mill Creek neighbours. She longed to join them. There were many others she didn't know; dainty girls, with shorter, trimmer skirts, fancy pinafores, and flaxen plaits of hair. All alike milled madly about, shouting—yelling, in high pitched voices at the top of their lungs. Natale wondered a little at this—her own approach to schooling, so far, had been associated with deep quiet—in a sequestered place. The girl beside the fence continued to watch.

Once, she faced about to where the bluff dropped down sharply to the ice-bound river below. They had built the school on a jutting promontory of the embankment—the high fence was built to prevent children falling down into the valley, presumably. As she faced the river she could see to her left the little church she had only once visited since it was built. She had gone with Miette to hear the music of that organ once more. On her right hand lay the palisaded fort.

Turning to look through the slit again, she could see André throwing up his little fur cap and catching it in his teeth, the way little Indian boys play. Of a sudden, Therese, playing

near, espied Natale's piercing eyes peering between the fence boards. She came nearer, and hissed in a big whisper at her older sister: "Ta ta wah!"⁸

Another child heard it—a flaxen-haired girl with bright woollen mitts and lace-edged pinny. "Ta-ta-wa-ah?" she said, drawing it out with a puzzled frown. Then another took it up—and then another. They pushed and crowded to the fence as children do in their exuberance over freedom during the recess time of school. "Ta-ta-wah, tatawah—TATAWAH!" they shouted and laughed—ridiculing, unmercifully.

Natale, hearing them, stiffened and rose, holding her thin shoulders up high in what appeared an overweening hauteur. This was only her long habit of protecting her delicate chest. She walked the length of the fence where it gave upon an opening, and there, with her face set hard, eyes like slits, she faced that excited mob of youngsters with coolest disdain. Natale was suffering keen humiliation, and she was proud.

The school children saw her there and were about to take up their derisive calling again, when the school door opened, a tall, stooped man once more rang a bell; their shouting died down and they at once started to form a line to march in. Without a second's hesitation Natale fell in with that line and marched with them into the school.

Coming indoors she crowded herself on a seat beside Therese. *She was inside a school!*

In here it was quiet and warm. The teacher, a tall, sandy-bearded man, paced up the aisle between the desks to the back, once, and then returned to his desk. He held a long black ruler upraised in his hand. He had found this a good thing to do. Next, he went to the blackboard in front and began to write. At the slightest sound from behind he would go to his desk and raise the ruler threateningly.

Natale kept her eyes on that ruler, and furtively measured distance to the door.

The scratching of chalk on the board went on and all around was the sound of squeaking pencils drawn across slates.

A big boy in a seat in front raised his hand. He received permission to thaw out his ink. It was frozen in the bottle. He placed it on the corrugated top platform of a big round-bellied stove that stood in the middle of the room between the two rows of desk forms.

The teacher, whom the pupils respectfully addressed as "Mister Harris,"⁴ ceased writing and began calling upon his class to recite. Natale tried to follow those figures on the board. She *couldn't*—the letters blurred, leaped and danced before her faulty eyes. Children, one by one, rose and read aloud, haltingly. Soon the turn would come to *her*. Natale began to shake all over in a fine steady shiver. It made the seat beneath her quiver, and Therese nudged her, annoyed. The desk she gripped in front began to shake, too, causing a pen to titillate against a ruler. It made a tiny tapping noise. Heads turned to look. Then the shake spread to the stove; a poker hanging on the side; a damper in the pipe; a lifter in a lid—all in little metallic sounds of sympathetic vibration to the shivering Natale.

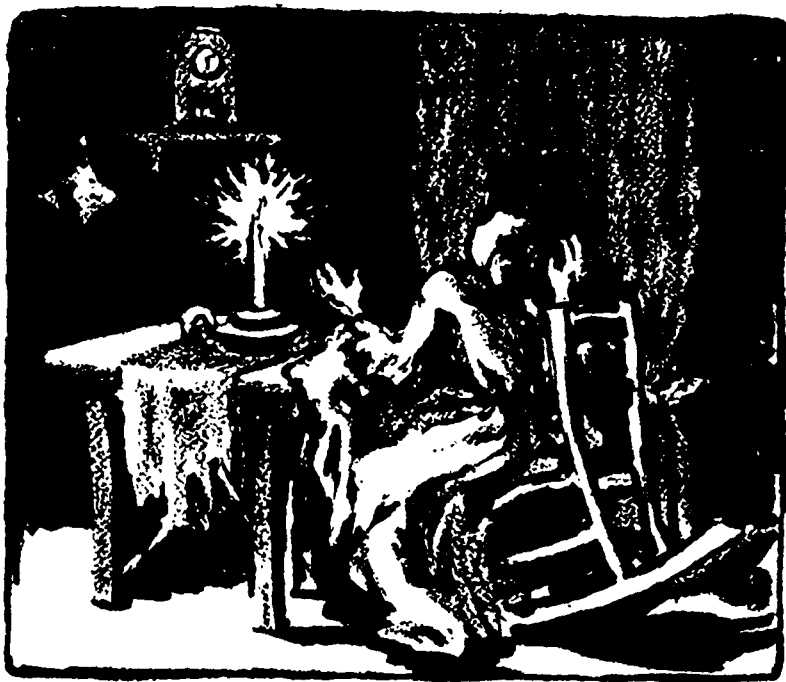
There was a sharp smothered burst from a boy seated in the back. The teacher glared. The reading aloud became even more hesitant. It stopped. All the other seats were now trembling, too, from the fearfully suppressed laughter of the sitters, laughing because of what Natale was causing in her bad fit of the 'Indian shivers.'

A look of alarm came upon the teacher's face, his long thin arm reached from habit towards his desk—towards that source of all control —. Then a terrific explosion, with a sound sharp as a gunshot, struck through the room, followed by the crash of shattered glass falling to the floor. The room became a scene of mob panic. No ruler, however wildly brandished, could calm or control that shrieking, hysterical body of crazed young creatures now.

The teacher finally gave up. He wiped his brow; mopped up the ink; swept up the bottle glass; washed sobbing, ink-splashed faces and shut the door against further stampede.

Barely half of his class of forty-odd pupils remained. It was a long while before order was restored in that schoolroom, which now had a much sprawled black spot^s upon its bright new ceiling. By and by some runaways returned, in twos and threes; awed and quiet.

Therese Borgereau did not return until the following day. Her sister, Natale, never came back again. She had terminated, forever, her quest for learning at the Edmonton Protestant Public School.



Chapter Eleven

A Prairie Wife Is Terrorized

HARRIET HUDSON was pinning up lace curtains in her front room. They were of cheap, coarse quality, but freshly white and stiffly starched.

With tasteful care she draped the shawls back over loops of white ribbon—ribbon that she had used at her wedding nearly ten years ago. She was barely twenty then—just a slip

of a girl, knowing nothing of the pioneer life she was to experience. Harriet sighed, rose and stepped back a little way, head on one side, to admire the effect of the draping. The ribbon streamers hanging between the curtain folds to the floor looked pretty, she thought.

The floor beneath was still damp from recent scrubbing. The windows were shining from the vigorous polishing they had just received.

Today was Saturday and Harriet was making everything as nice as she could in her farm house for a Sunday occasion. They were going to hold church service in their house tomorrow.

The thought thrilled her. Back home in Barrie, one took church on Sunday as a matter of course. You went to the church in town; saw the people you knew; listened to the sermon, and then drove home again after a chat with friends. You didn't think much about church again until another Sunday came around. Here, out west, it was different. You made things ready for the service—neighbours and friends who lived miles from your farm came to your house. Your own minister, the Presbyterian minister, came. You listened to his sermon and remembered every word he preached. You *were* the church here—just like it said in the Bible.

Harriet wondered idly if the LeGrands, the nearest neighbours, would come. They weren't, she knew, Presbyterian—but you would think they would come, even to a service of another denomination, when it was only a mile away—rather than drive seven miles to their own church in Edmonton. Mrs. LeGrand was a little strange, though—not very neighbourly. It would be more fun if some people like the McKernan family were settled near her, she thought. Though Mr. LeGrand was very pleasant and friendly—always saying funny things to make her and the children laugh. Everyone liked Mr. LeGrand. He was nice looking, too. Jim said that was why Mrs. LeGrand didn't make up to folks, she was afraid

of losing him. Perhaps Jim was right—Mrs. LeGrand was some older than her husband, too.

Harriet put her hand to the clean wide boards of the floor to make sure they were dry enough. Then she went to a small trunk that stood against the wall and which they commonly used for seating. It was once Harriet's 'hope' chest, that they carted with them from the east. Raising the lid, she took from it a small rug. It was unrolled and spread beneath the curtained window. This prized red plush rug, patterned with garlands of roses, was a wedding present and as yet had scarcely ever been trod upon. Now it was to be used—thereupon the minister would stand, while he preached the Sunday sermon.

Harriet looked about the room, altogether satisfied, then went to the kitchen. Cinnamon buns were in the oven baking. It was always good to have them with your tea—for those who would have a long drive home after the service.

The kitchen, too, had been scrubbed—a big roomy kitchen, just like she wanted to have, with wide window sills for her house plants. Jim had built their house on the homestead a year after they came west.

The smell of the freshly blackened stove mingled with that of the baking buns.

Harriet went to her pantry and there opened a trap door in the floor leading to her cellar. She wanted to skim the milk pans for churning. She still had quite a bit to do, though she had been up since five that morning to do all she had planned for the day. Jim had gone away with Alec LeGrand—to help take out a lot of their horses to sell.

They would sell to the police fort mostly. Jim went because Alec needed a hand with the stallion along.

Without Jim she could get a lot done in a day. Pretty soon it would be time for Betty to waken. Next week baby Betty was going to have a birthday—her first. She shall have a cake, too, Harriet decided, though, of course, it will be the boys who will really get the benefit of it. There were three boys in the Hudson family—Clifford, nine; Roger, seven, and Ben,

four. Ben was napping, too. 'Rog' and 'Cliff' were outside in the yard playing at 'making hay.' It was a scheme Harriet herself had worked out for them, for tidying up the yard with a little toy rake.

They were playing nicely together and not quarrelling. Harriet saw that the hop vines had started and were climbing up on their strings. It was only early April. They would shade the window soon. Grand—for the hot weather coming later.

They had a back porch—a front one, too—but Jim had never bought the shingles to finish building roof tops on them.

Last one had been the *seventh* spring, that he had said while she was tacking the vine stringing on the porch framework; "*next* spring, Hattie-pattie, you won't need those vines, I'll have the shingles on those porches!"

But on a farm there was always too much work to do—the chickens; the vegetable garden—Jim had to help her—the boys were still too young.

Harriet returned from the cellar with a large pitcher of sour cream and went to get the butter-churn outside on the porch. Her eye roved to the trail that led to town—Jim wasn't to be expected yet, but it was quite a common thing to see wagon teams and cart trains of settlers coming there. Often they turned out to be people from Ontario whom the folks at home knew. When they had last gone to town for supplies the store man had said: "You know the Weldons, back east? Well Jake, the eldest boy, has brought his young wife and settled north of your place—'bout six miles." Did she know them? Why, the Weldons were Jim's Welsh cousins! Then they had gone to see them—the minister, too. You hadn't time or occasion to be lonely any more. Whenever Harriet saw a covered wagon going slowly across country, she had an impulse to run to meet it—tell the womenfolk, who were dirty and tired trekking from railend at Calgary, not to mind this seemingly bare and strange country, nor the Indians and their queer ways. I could tell them that neither the Indians nor the halfbreeds have bothered us any, thought Harriet. Though,

dear knows one hears plenty of rumours of things! They were getting more and more troublesome to new settlers—that wasn't to be denied. Mrs. LeGrand hated them, always called them "those blasted Breeds," whether halfbreed or not. Jim's motto was, "leave'm alone and they won't bother you." Some had stolen all the logs back of LeGrand's ranch that Alec had cut and readied for building a new stable to house their stallion, "Mazeppa."

A bleating cry from upstairs came from Betty. Harriet stopped her churning at once to go and attend her baby girl.

* * * * *

At ten thirty Harriet lighted the little kerosene lamp a mite grudgingly. It shouldn't have been necessary to light a lamp at all in spring—they usually were in bed by ten with daylight. Coal oil was dear.¹ Jim hadn't got home, and it was useless to go to bed unable to sleep, in her anxious state of mind.

Once before, when Jim had gone to Fort Saskatchewan with Alec and horses, he had been late, too. It had been because of Alec's being so popular there at the police fort, Jim explained, especially with the young womenfolk there—the daughters of officers. Some of the horses were being bought for *their* use this time—no doubt a lot of time would be spent in trying the horses' gait—and still more wasted on a lot of flirtatious chatter between Alec and those young girls. No wonder Mrs. LeGrand assumed a distant, aloof manner!

Harriet took up some crocheting she was doing. She was making a lace edging on an underskirt for Betty—the material of which was bleached flour sacking. It had become almost a pure white in the sudsing she had given it. The points of lace on its hem gave the little petticoat a dainty effect. Their darling Betty was going to look sweet in it tomorrow! There wasn't much more of edging needed to have it finished. Harriet bent her smoothly brushed head nearer the lamp's yellow

light. Hers was a neat, comely figure in the rocking chair beside the table. She was a plumper, rosier woman than she was when she made the trek west in a cart nine years ago. Though now, like then, she was weary with a mind full of unrest.

The hours dragged on. The clock's hands now stood at long past midnight. The coal oil in the lamp was getting lower. Harriet decided she wouldn't fill it again. They hadn't much—needed what was left for the lantern.

She listened for some sound of Jim's coming. It was so quiet—just the clock's ticking—but above that? Another beat—faint, far away: Indian drumming. The Indians and their stupid, silly Sun Dances! They're down near the river somewhere, working themselves into a proper pitch—three caravans on the trail today—it was *they*.

Harriet rocked and rested her eyes a moment; she was tired. She walked to the open door, looked out into the dark; heard croaking of frogs outside in the mild spring night. What was that? She stood still, with every nerve tensed. Was it just the panting of a dog? But they had no dog. Harriet went back to her chair—the lamp was burning low already. She thought of candles—no use going to bed—Jim must be coming any moment now.

The candle, in a low china holder, made so little light, she couldn't even do her crocheting with it. That sound *again!* Her rocking stopped, Harriet turned slowly and fearfully to the window. A moving shape was there and peering in between the curtain shawls was the monstrosously painted face of an Indian!

Harriet recoiled in horror, a whistling scream came from her opened lips—she couldn't move—couldn't cry out, she sat frozen in an awful terror.

The children! That beast must not ——! Next action was taken without thinking. She was at the door—had flung it shut—latched it, and was kneeling down, clinging to the latch

handle. It was only a simple one of wood Jim had fashioned with a knife, and it had no means for locking. How inadequate now!

The rush of air from the door's slam had blown out the candle flame. She was in darkness. With fingers locked about the handle and her weight pressing against the door she waited—waited—to hear footsteps.

There was no movement outside the door—only her heart beats were hammering her body frightfully. It seemed like hours and hours that she hung there waiting—listening. She *couldn't—mustn't* leave go the door! Keep that monster outside—the children safe. Oh Jim! Jim — come now — come now —!

After what seemed an eternity she released one hand—loosed cramped fingers. Everything was quiet and it seemed lighter in the room. Harriet crawled along the wall towards the window—softly, catlike, so as not to be heard. The Indian drums were plainer now to her sensitive ears. There were cries, too—cries of human agony, youths undergoing their rites of torture.²

That *window*—unbearable to look at it—but it drew her. She knew she must go to it; see if that spectre—the horrible thing like some reptilian monster—was there.

Crouched low, Harriet continued to edge along the wall towards the front room on her hands and knees. Her hand finally touched upon the soft pile of the rug—the little red rug upon which the preacher was to stand tomorrow—long, long ago she had thought *that*.

Cautiously she raised herself upwards. No one there. In the distance the dim outlines of barn, chicken house and hogpen. The barn door had been opened wide! The Indian must have gone in there!

Harriet sank back, trembling. What should she do? What *could* she do? Jim's rifle, hanging over the kitchen door—brutally heavy. She'd never lifted it—never loaded it. "Oh! Jim! why don't you come back home? How could you ever

leave us alone like this all night!" Harriet twisted her hands together, that were clammy from fright.

A sudden knocking came at the door, with someone calling. It shook the cowering woman on the floor into a renewed panic. But the voice, a woman's voice, was calling her name! Harriet scrambled to her feet; ran back to the kitchen door, flung it open and reeled towards the figure before her. She knew who it was, at once.

"Oh—Oh—Mrs. LeGrand! Mrs. LeGrand! I'm so glad, so-o-o gla-ad you've come!" Harriet clutched at her neighbour's arm, her high pitched voice quavering dangerously near hysteria. "Mrs. LeGrand! The Indian! You saw the *Indian*?" She pointed to the front room, her voice going up and up uncontrollably.

"Oh! You're in a *state*! I'm sorry if I've alarmed you—I thought you abed—all was dark ——."

"No! No! Mrs. LeGrand, it wasn't *you*—it was *that Indian* in the barn ——."

"In the barn? *You say there's an Indian in your barn?* Give me a lantern! Quick! I'll go out ——." She shook Harriet off rudely.

"Mrs. LeGrand! You can't go! You mustn't go away—stay inside—don't leave me alone—alone ——," Harriet pleaded piteously.

"I've *got* to go—I need a horse to—to—fetch Alec. The d——d Indians have got all our colts—they're gone! stolen!" Agnes LeGrand spoke with jaws hard, eyes flashing with angry indignation.

Harriet lit the lantern with shaking fingers.

"Wait," she said, "till it's light—till the men come!"

"*Wait!*" snorted the LeGrand woman. She couldn't tell Harriet she had been driven almost mad in the last several hours—waiting—thinking all the time of Alec, with that brainless, tow-headed girl there at the Barracks—Alec singing songs to her accompaniment, the while she would be looking up at him with her big adoring eyes! Agnes LeGrand hadn't

gone to bed either. She, too, had heard the distant drumming and had gone to the corral finally, upon hearing a disturbance, to find the horses gone.

"I'm going to go for help before those wretched thieves get too far with our colts—I can ride 'Fred,' your driver. Has Jim another saddle? If not, I've —."

"O—Oh," moaned Harriet, "you're not going to go out to the *barn*?"

"That gun!" Agnes pointed up at it, altogether disregarding her.

They brought it down and Agnes found it loaded. She knew how to shoot it, too. Harriet lit the candle. She tried to recount something of her frightful experience. It seemingly received scant attention. In fact, while Harriet was telling it, Mrs. LeGrand raised the rifle to her shoulder and took aim between the curtains, apparently hoping the Redman would appear so she could shoot him on the spot. Her attitude was somehow reassuring to Harriet, though she still continued to beg Agnes not to leave her.

So together they went out to the barn—Harriet holding the lantern and Agnes carrying the gun. Harriet held back, stood outside the door a little way and held the lantern up high. The bolder woman went inside the stable. The Hudson's driver was not there. Only two old work horses remained in their stalls.

Agnes came out again and took the lantern from Harriet, stood the gun beside her. "I need more light to find the saddle," she said. With the lantern closer, Agnes saw something else that she would not disclose to her frightened neighbour outside. Below the stall there was some straw and manure still smouldering. It had been fired! Praise God, there wasn't a wind that night! Agnes stamped it out, kicked earth over it. That decided her. She would drive the Hudsons into Fort Edmonton.

She came out, presently, leading the two heavy, clumsy-footed creatures, "Bill" and "Bess"—the Hudson plow horses.

"Go in and dress the children—and hurry! We're driving to town." Harriet obeyed without a word.

Betty never even wakened, nor Ben. Cliff and Roger were tremendously excited over the prospect of a drive to town. It was a treat they only rarely enjoyed. Going in the middle of the night rather increased the novelty.

"Can we sit on the front seat with Mrs. LeGrand, Mama? Can we?"

"Yes—Yes! Hurry with your dressing, Cliff!" Harriet dashed madly about, pulling out warm garments from a dresser and a trunk. It was going to be chilly driving at night in the open wagon.

The lantern was tied to the wagon box. On leaving, before dousing the candles, Harriet still felt that the baby might be cold while driving in the night air.

"Wrap that rug about her, then," Agnes suggested, looking at the bright new rug below the window. She glanced again at that window with its carefully draped curtains. It struck her that there was something a little pathetic about it. Never was a lace curtain hung at the LeGrand ranch house—just a few dressed deer hides were pressed into service at some windows.

Harriet snatched up the rug, wrapped it around the sleeping Betty, and followed Agnes to the wagon. Betty was in the stiff roll of rug like an Indian baby in a cradle board.

Clifford and Roger climbed up beside Agnes on the driver's seat. Harriet sat behind on the hay-covered floor of the wagon supporting her two younger children.

Then began for Agnes the most memorable drive of her life. It was awful! Those plugs wouldn't trot. They would only walk; *clop—clop—clop—clop*. It drove her nearly frantic. She groaned at the toughness of their mouths. She jerked and pulled and urged with all her might just to get them going at a faster gait.

"Pa never runs 'em," Cliff told her, a little shocked at her manner of driving.

"*They shall trot!*" answered Agnes, between set lips. Horses of poor breed—poorly trained! By dint of constant heckling the irritated beasts were making sporadic attempts at a run.

The wagon lumbered along the grassy trail that swung in and around the river ravines into town. A ghostly grey light began to show in the eastern heavens as they reached the ferry crossing near Walter's house. Harriet had been asleep, she was sure; she noticed that both boys in front were listed heavily against Agnes' erect figure.

Muchias was there to ferry them across. Harriet saw the McKernan's wagon and horses in the corral at Walter's place. She asked Muchias about them. He told her they had come late that night³ and were sleeping at Walter's place. They would ferry across to the fort at daybreak. Hearing of "bad troubles" had brought them in, he said.

Harriet was so glad she and the children were now close to others in town. She still worried about Jim.

Sentinels opened the big gates for them when they reached the fort entrance. With a thankful sigh, Harriet heard those stout gates close behind her and bolts clanged down—shutting them into safety.

Rows and rows of tents stood inside the stockade. At an emergency meeting of the village men, which was called the night before, upon hearing of the Frog Lake massacre, it was decided to bring all the outlying settlers to the fort for temporary refuge. Jim Hudson, just arrived an hour earlier, had already requisitioned a large tent for his family. He was about to leave the fort to fetch them when he saw his own wagon team, "Bill" and "Bess," coming through the gates. The horses were spent and foaming at their bits. The family reunited, became noisily loquacious in their relief and joy. The children were immediately bundled into the tent. Their disturbance awakened those in a neighbouring tent. The Morrisons, from north of town, were asleep in there.

Mrs. Morrison recognized Harriet's voice. She called from the tent. Did the mother need a hand? Who had brought

her the news?⁴ Had she seen to hiding her household valuables before leaving? They had buried all their "good" dishes three feet below ground.

Harriet realized ruefully that she hadn't even given hers a thought. But she was thankful—just so thankful, that she now had the children and Jim, too, near her and safe. Gently she laid Betty down on a cot in their tent; still snugly asleep. Harriet removed the stiff, enveloping wrap about the baby. She had her pretty red rug, anyway. Behind the tents towered the thick walls of the stockade—windowless—shutting out the Indians. Harriet knew she could never again be unafraid of Indians.

Jim still talked to Agnes. In his awkward way he was saying words of gratitude for her bringing the family into town—Harriet never drove the horses—and for remembering to bring his gun, too. Agnes told him of the missing horse, signs of his stable being set afire, and of their own horses being stolen. It plainly irked her that Alec had seen fit to part from Jim and go back to Fort Saskatchewan with the remainder of their herd. In vain did Jim expostulate that Alec had reasons for that, he had been given special messages from Father Scollen at St. Albert, to take to the Mounted Police. They had found it necessary to make a wide detour of many miles returning from the north mission, to by-pass Bob Tail's⁵ pursuing, meddlesome men.

Agnes was determined to go at once to the police fort, even before light. She would not remain with the Hudsons. They remonstrated with her. It was of no use—she would get a fast horse and ride on right away.

Harriet marvelled at Agnes' bravery—remembered her straight form going into their barn, holding up Jim's heavy gun. A truly courageous lady!

"Don't go out in all this danger, Mrs. LeGrand, please! Of course I know how you feel—but Alec will be all right." Then with a sudden impetuosity Harriet added: "You've done so much tonight already—for us! Oh! Mrs. LeGrand, I could *kiss you!*"

"Oh! but you *won't really*, will you?" answered the other woman in some alarm.

They saw her go. She was given young Rick's saddle horse—a spirited, untamed animal. It wanted for exercise since its master, Richard, a boy of fifteen, was away at school. The Hudsons watched her mount the rearing "Pepper," wheeling him strongly under control.

"My! She isn't afraid of *anything*—is she?"

In that, Harriet was wrong. Agnes cringed in fear of something, and it was that which caused her to gallop "Pepper" like one possessed towards the eastern horizon and the police barracks eighteen miles away.

She had stopped a brief moment at the factor's house. There was light in the bay window of the big front room and a number of men were guarding the place. She left her message and walked out through the kitchen. That kitchen—which held so much of memory for her. Sacks of flour⁶ were now piled high against the back wall for bullet protection.

It was cold and grey in the room, as it had been one early morning many years ago. But then there were no fair young girls about with soft, white skins and big blue eyes to steal Alec from her. Mac was no longer cook; he had taken to farming and was married to a half-breed widow with three children—Lena Borgereau.

On the trail riding on through the village, Agnes noted that the scattered houses had their windows lighted. Some of the white families had evidently not gone to the shelter⁷ of the forts. The siege of Edmonton was on!

At Fort Saskatchewan there were also men picketing the walls. All were instructed to fire a warning shot upon sight of anyone approaching.

The fast galloping "Pepper" took a sentinel off guard—his shot came when Agnes had just about reached the walled-in fort. Pepper made one wild leap into the air at that close gun report; then bucked crazily, throwing his altogether exhausted rider to the ground. At once men came running.

They picked up the unconscious woman and brought her inside the gates. Alec, running to them, saw to his startled amazement that the victim was Agnes, his wife. He immediately grasped her inert form from them and lifted her close to him.

"Agnes! Agnes!" he cried in anguish. "Oh, darling! You're hurt! Oh, Agnes! Open your eyes . . . Get water! Call the doctor, quick!" he fairly spat this out at the women, who were now also upon the scene. His manners were forgotten in his anxiety.

"I'll kill that brute!" groaned Alec. "Throwing you, hurting you. Oh, what can I *do*, Agnes? Only tell me what to *do*—where are you hurt?"

And though his wife's eyes remained closed—*she heard*. Instinctively, she had taken her fall the right way.

Consciousness returned, and with it came content that she was safe, safe in Alec's arms and in his love. Nothing else mattered. Her bruised body, stolen property, sleepless night, she would soon forget. For she was altogether safe and happy. The "blawsted breeds" had brought this about.

* * * * *

On a morning of the memorable spring of '85 Milly Newbridge sat at Daniel's desk—writing. She was penning the lines in the brisk speediness of a sister writing a brother. Occasionally she stopped, listened closely for some sound without.

The sleeves of her grey uniform were turned back to keep the white cuffs fresh. Her crisp grey hair was neatly brushed back into a tidy knot. The pen fairly flew over the paper: "*. . . and it seems hardly possible, Dan, that six weeks have gone since you left. I have had so much to occupy me.*

"For, the very next week after your departure our little hospital⁸ again received a patient. And what a patient! A man, a great heavy bush man, who has suffered an internal chest injury from a falling log.

Tomison was awakened by barking dogs the night the victim was brought here on a cariole by some half breeds. The patient, too, is a half breed—Tomison knows him—one 'Henri Borgereau'. Mindful of your instructions to treat the Indian people on the same basis as white, I immediately admitted the patient for medical treatment.

His condition is still critical after these five weeks. The doctor believes that a fractured rib has made a small puncture in the lung where an abscess is developing. Temperatures continue high. Chances for recovery are still doubtful.

I do not know how I could manage without Tom. He has to come back from his work at the newspaper office every day now, to help me with my patient, who is a rebellious, untractable person. Tom told him once that if he didn't lie still and do as I told him, he'd certainly die; and that seems to have helped matters some. Tom is also assisting on certain hours at the post office. He has brought out a letter addressed to Borgereau which I have enclosed. (Note with what a flourishing, elegant hand it is addressed). Tom insists upon your reading this letter before it be read to the patient. Though I was ready to allow Natale, the daughter who is a nun, to read it for him (the man is unable to read himself). But Tom will not submit it until you consent to that arrangement. Tom is quite firm on this point and I feel that he suspects that it contains a seditious message from Louis Riel who continues to stir up⁹ the half-breeds east of us, even more than ever.

I asked Tom if he thought our breeds here would attack us, and he said we were safe as long as they remained peacefully encamped near about us and the town; but a sudden exodus¹⁰ would mean their alignment with Riel. Tom knows some, who from personal pique, are near the point of being hostile. But they all like our Tom, I suppose because he saved the situation for the drunk breed, Jean, that time he was going to be thrown over the cliff inside his shack by the "Vigilantes".¹¹ At any rate don't worry about us. I am sure I don't fear anything.

Sometimes, though, with all the strenuous work entailed

nursing male patients, doing household tasks, I almost rue the day I received that letter of yours when at Queen Charlotte's Hospital.

That was an extraordinary letter, Daniel. I think of it when the going is heavy. You must have been very strongly moved by that happening which brought about the death of the Indian girl, to have put such telling power and conviction in your words. I have kept that letter, as I often think its eloquent plea for education, medical aid and hospitals for Indians should have reached others besides just your nurse sister, who is getting on in years—you know I am fifty now. It should have come to the attention of some wealthy and influential philanthropist, or the Academy of Medicine in London or Edinburgh. I took the liberty to show it to Helene just before I left England. Do you realize, old dear, that that is five years ago? She realized then why I never gave up my plan to come here in spite of what Dr. Croll said about my heart. She was almost persuaded to come along with me on reading it again. I wish now, I had encouraged her idea. If she still wants to come back with you after you're married, by all means don't dissuade her. Hasn't she the right to make sacrifices, too, if she sees fit? How very much I would like to be at the wedding! It promises well, an old fashioned garden wedding in summer!

No doubt you will find each other changed. I thought Helene became more thoughtful, purposeful, and lovely, too, each year I visited her. I know you will be happy together.

God bless you both!

I must close and attend to pressing duties. I am sending this to your ship—"The Parisian".

Tomison joins me to wish you a safe voyage.

As ever,

Your loving sister,¹²

"Milly"

When she raised her head one saw at once she was much like Daniel Newbridge: a cleft in the firm chin; a high forehead and grey eyes.

Womanlike, she thought of just another word. The postscript ran: *"I am sending on the last four 'Bulletins'. The editorial of Feb. 16th number is Tomison's own writing. Hope this gets away on tomorrow's stage to reach you before sailing. I think my patient has a visitor at the door!"*

Yes, there was Jeanette. Milly Newbridge thought of her as the "old Indian woman" never realizing that Jeanette was actually several years younger than herself.

Milly led Jeanette toward the log hospital, trying to say bright and encouraging things about her husband.

The log hospital stood a little to the side of the Hermitage. Inside, it was cheery with morning sunlight falling on its clean floor and white bed.

The great gaunt form of Henri Borgereau lay upon the bed. Some of his former handsome strength of youth remained, but the son of the old steersman for the 'Northwesters' and 'The Honorable Company' was now a stricken man. The whites of pained and bewildered eyes showed as he stared wildly at the two women who entered. Husband and wife offered each other no greeting. Jeanette stood still at the foot of the bed with eyes downcast, gazing at her emaciated Henri.

He looked at his wife, this woman who knew him—served him, and had borne his numerous children—whom he had bullied into an unquestioning submission to his will.

But the other woman was speaking—one who now ordered him in every deed of his life. She had taken a thermometer from her uniform pocket, dipped it in a glass containing an antiseptic solution.

"Open your mouth," came the cool command.

Henri's pale lips parted, obediently.

After a while Jeanette followed Nurse Newbridge to the house. Milly was about to entrust her letter to the half breed woman to take with her to the village post office, when she remembered that Tom had warned her not to let that letter out of her hands. But the newspapers—she could give her

those. Milly knew the Borgereau woman would be complimented to be asked to do this little favour.

They exchanged a few pleasantries before Jeanette left.

Yes, Jeanette knew the paper. Natale could read them, so also could Therese, who was very smart in school. Natale, she said, was proud she could read with facility, even as Therese. She had read aloud what Tom had printed in the paper.

"Natale," added Jeanette, "Eez vay-ree proud—of Tom—an' 'eez 'write'."

After, Milly pondered upon this odd remark. *Natale*, 'proud' of Tom? To be *proud* of anyone though, implied some ownership in the person. A friend, perhaps?

The editorial had been an argument for the need of tolerance in dealing with the Metis and their grievances. It was just possible, mused Milly Newbridge, that Natale in her strange tense way, loved Tom for what he had written.

* * * * *

Daniel was standing at the deck rail of the "Parisian,"¹⁸ after departure from the port of Halifax. Rather lonely in feeling, he watched the aimless flight of sea gulls circling back of the ship. A young man, a ship's officer, came up beside him.

"Canon Newbridge?"

Daniel merely nodded in reply. He had become more reticent than formerly.

"A telegraphic message has come for you, sir. It is in the purser's office."

The message was from Milly. It told that she was safe and unmolested. That she was in need of funds; that her patient, Borgereau, had passed away the night before.

The message was dated the last week of April and had been greatly delayed because of telegraph wires being cut in the west by plundering Indians.

Before embarking Daniel had heard the news of a military force¹⁴ under Major-General Strange reaching Edmonton; of Riel's imminent surrender.¹⁵ These assurances had allowed him to continue his journey to England. He had been in the east several weeks trying in vain to enlighten Government officials regarding the true situation of Indian affairs in the west. The results of his efforts had not come up to his expectations. He had become a trifle weary of well doing.

A certain hardness came over his countenance at recalling the protracted waits in outer offices, the glibness of some promises to do all possible. Something of that hardness remained in his lean browned face—a tuned and tense face of maturity. Some of this firmness had come from asking himself many times in the past years if carrying out a task undertaken was worth the risk of annihilation and destruction. There was grey in his brown hair at the temples, too; for Daniel was now thirty seven.

He opened a thick packet of mail that was also waiting him at the ship's office and saw among it the little Edmonton newspapers and the bulging letter from his sister. Milly's letter must have been delayed, too. He read it with lively interest.

And now that Borgereau was dead he felt even greater reluctance in opening the enclosed brief in his sister Milly's letter. Tomison had thrust an unsavory responsibility upon him. However, one glance inside, proved the wisdom of Tom's decision. Somehow, Tom must have known of its seditious content; of that he felt certain. For the letter from Riel to his "Dear brother and kinsman" was fraught with the most dangerous kind of seditiousness—a direct order to organize revolt.

Evidently it had been laboriously copied from an original letter by Riel with only the address and signature written in Riel's own hand. Both punctuation and chirography had suffered thereby. Daniel struggled with its wordy, fulsome expression written in French. The ravings of the deranged,¹⁶

religious fanatic began with telling his correspondent of the important victory¹⁷ which their cause had won since the last letter, in which only thirty-five Metis had brought one hundred and twenty men to rout. "Arise *now* and strike!" demanded the writer. "Face the enemy—when you take the fort there—*destroy it*. Save all the merchandise and provisions and then come and join us. Your number there is over three hundred. Spare not the traitors. Do this all for the love of God, under the protection of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John the Baptist — — — — —."

Daniel was appalled. What action might have resulted had Tom not withheld this letter? He wished greatly then to have Tom near to speak to him. Tom's taciturnity had always baffled Dan somewhat, but it only served to make his rare moments of confidence the more interesting.

He wanted nothing more than to hear Tom's good voice right now.

Dan spread the letter sheet upon the ship's rail and leant his arms upon it. For a while he gave over to nostalgic thoughts of his parish of "All Saints" in Edmonton.

Already land had receded into a narrow line upon the horizon. Yonder lay the fair land of Canada, wherein he had struggled hard for nine years; a country which was now in the throes of rebellion and dangerous political turmoil. He was leaving it; going home to England, where he knew an easy life of plentiful peace. Did he want that life again? No. He was returning only because of Helene—to bring her back with him as his wife. In a sense a marriage had already been consummated between them in their long, voluminous and faithful correspondence. In mind, they already belonged to each other.

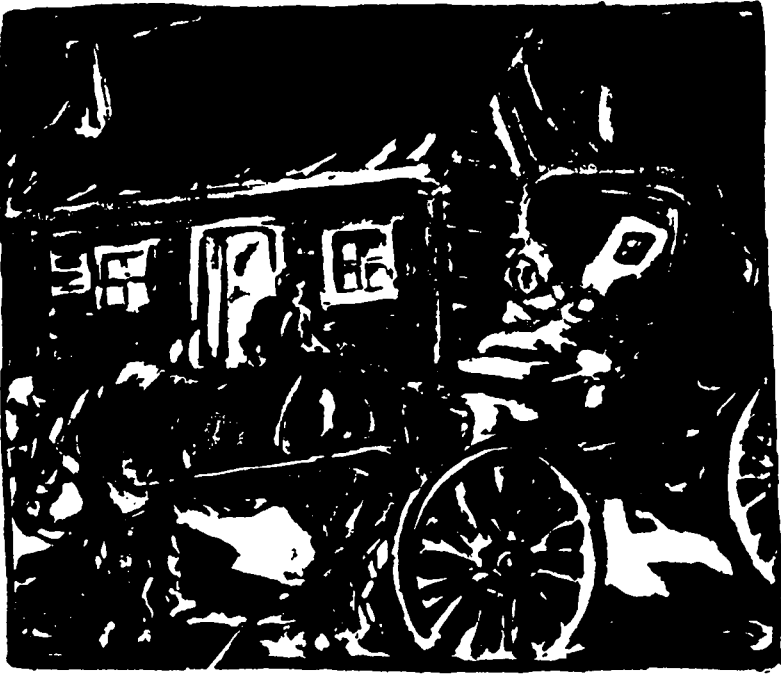
They would make a life together in the new land that must some day offer freedom from want and fear for its people—white or red.

Once more his eye fell upon the letter to the dead half-breed—sent to incite him to take up arms against his fellow

Canadians. Now it could never be read to him. Should he send it back to the dead man's family? Mayhap compromise them?

Deliberately Dan took up the sheet of paper, ripped it across once, twice, three and four times; then tore the pieces into tiny bits, flinging them out far to the churning waters of the Atlantic.

Overhead, the wheeling gulls swooped down to those scattered drifting fragments of a letter from "Louis David Riel, Exovede," squalling their mournful cries.



Chapter Twelve

An Unknown Child Is Adopted

TOM took the reins across Christopher's back and urged him on: "Come now, Chris, old boy—you can do better than *that!*" The nag broke from a slow walk to a half-hearted trot on hearing the familiar voice in mild reproof. Chris' harness flapped noisily and the lumbering vehicle behind rattled along the trail.

In more than a decade of service Christopher had changed but little; "Columbus" on the other hand, was so drastically altered as to be scarcely recognizable as Dan's original rig.

When Milly Newbridge came from England the old rig needed to accommodate another passenger for the trips to town. Then for weather protection a tarpaulin was fixed about her extra place in the back. So with this extension in the rear and a sheltering canvas atop, the vehicle now had a very odd appearance. The countryside dubbed it "Tom's rig" now that Canon Newbridge was no longer there. The quaint old buggy did valiant duty for the occupants of the Hermitage and it was often pressed into service for taking patients to and from the hospital.

"I'd rather go slower, Tom," came a fretful voice from behind.

"Oh, I'm very sorry, Mrs. Weldon." The road had become rough—Chris was brought back to his old slow pace. Tom calculated that at this rate the woman and baby wouldn't get home to Jake until dark. When Jake had brought his young wife, great with child, to Nurse Newbridge's more than a month ago, he had driven directly across the ice-bound river in a sleigh, which shortened the distance to the Hermitage by half. In the last week spring had suddenly come upon them and the river was running free of ice once more. The return home was now being made by the long circuitous way which led through town to make the river crossing on the ferry.

Grace Weldon, in the back seat, drew the carriage robe up closer and looked at the baby that lay in the basket beside her. There was only anxiety in her woebegone face, none of the joy of new motherhood. The little rosy mite in the basket was so *sweet*—and Jake had wanted it to be a girl—the woman's face twisted in a momentary spasm of inward grief and then settled back to its bleak apathy. Grace Weldon had something of prettiness in her small face that was now ravaged by recent throes of childbirth. Her dispirited countenance held grief, too; the silent, passive grieving for the

stillborn. "Will Jake be glad I brought this other baby? Miss Newbridge was glad I took it—and the money—Jake needs money for another horse—he ought to be glad for this money—and there's more for the dear little thing, too, later, when she's older—anytime she needs it. If Miss Newbridge gets sick or goes back to England she is going to leave it in *our own* minister's hands to keep—I told her that—I wish I knew more about this baby, little 'Pauline'—everything about her —." Thus the thoughts of the poor perplexed woman as Christopher's hooves clopped steadily onwards towards the trail leading to husband and home.

On the seat in front, Tom sat forward, elbows outspread on knees, and let Chris's loose lines dangle. He breathed in the brisk spring air that smelled damp and earthy. "Spring," said Tom, "when a young man's fancy turns lightly to thoughts of —." Ah, but not *this* young man—this young man's fancies do not turn, not even lightly, to thoughts of that kind. It was because he was so old in mind, so disillusioned, so wise. Last night he had read late—one of his cherished books on philosophy. "*Pleasure*," wrote Schopenhauer, "*Pleasure is negative—pain positive, for any sort of pleasure is never anything more than the quietive of some need or longing. . .*" Well, he hadn't any need or longing. "Tom, put on your good clothes and go to the church social, there are nice young girls there." It was Nurse Milly speaking.

"Oh Lord," Tom had groaned, "me preen myself for the 'nice young girls!'" He didn't want to go. Once he had gone, and at the close of the "social" a determined young woman had addressed him: "Mother says you can come to visit us at our place next Sunday. We live —," and a description of the place followed. Fortunately a raging blizzard had howled over the prairies that Sunday, so he had been absolved from paying his respects to the lady. Why didn't "nice young girls" please him? Perhaps he still secretly harboured his ideal of a lovely Metis girl—gone years ago. For such as she, there was no need for him to "spruce up," as Nurse Milly had it,

or go to the village socials. Miette was without coquetry or guile—love shone in her eyes, which was as spontaneously expressed as it was tender. Her spirit had come very near him in these last difficult weeks—that night at her grave—that night he had had that ghastly duty to perform. “Take *this*”—Nurse Milly had said, holding out a swathed bundle to him and the doctor as they were leaving—“You—must—bury it—somewhere.” Milly had come from out the hospital room, that was once more mercifully quiet—her face ashen.

Going back to town the doctor had fallen into the same stupor Tom had found him in upon fetching him the night before. As he was roused and dragged into his house, the man muttered incoherently and then groaned out: “I hadn’t the instruments—the nerve—to do what was needed, there. You’re a good fellow, Tom—come in—Tom, come in—’n have—a—drink—,” which was declined. Though afterwards, in the lonely graveyard, he had found the gruesome task before him unnerving. He was an ass not to have taken it; he knew then.

He had found Miette’s grave showing a slight depression on the snow covered ground and knowing her passionate love for all young, he had buried the stillborn infant beside her. Some of the spiritual quality of her maternal love was borne in upon his mind—he felt moved to profoundest pity for this babe in its lonely burial who was denied one life-giving breath to live. Nor should there be given any mark for its tiny grave. Somehow he was loath to leave it thus. Close by, at the head of Miette’s grave was a wooden cross; listing forward. On this he had placed a tribute for her sake and for the newly-buried one’s sake. That small, pathetic lifeless one was somehow symbolical of their love which, too, was buried, stillborn.

As Tom went wearily homeward that night, a fitful wind swung a pearly half shell gently to and fro, hanging from the cross on Miette’s grave.

* * * * *

The trail was much wider now—they were nearly in the town. The settlement had grown in the past year—since General Strange had quartered his men in the village. New houses and many tents were springing up all around. Though these tents were white men's tents—army tents and settlers' tents—not native tepees. There was a complete absence of tepees, even last spring these were no longer beside the fort—Tom had noticed this when they buried old Borgereau below the hill. The palisades had been taken down, too. It had leaned in places—rotten at the base. Had the Indians only known! He found himself, paradoxically enough, wishing that they had! Danger from Indians was now a thing of the past. Flames that had burned, smouldered for years, and even flared up fiercely but a year ago, were now dead.

Arriving in town, Tom drove down the main street, and helped Mrs. Weldon to alight in front of a big frame building, the new "Queen's" hotel. There she was to gain rest for the remainder of the journey. Tom in the meantime went to visit the 'Bulletin' editor to submit copy and discuss format of next week's paper. He bought some hardware in a store across the street from the newspaperman's office and then went to the little post office. In there his eye was caught by a hastily scrawled notice that was pinned on the wall: "*Bright young man wanted as assistant—apply at Land Office to Mr. R.—*" with the agent's name appended.

This notice of a position was long and intently studied. Keen and deeply set eyes narrowed and brows quirked up and down humorously. I am 'young,' said Tom, shifting weight from one lean hip to the other—am I 'bright'—bright enough to keep greedy people from grabbing claims from the simple half-breeds? The face lost whimsical expression, set in resolute lines with a determined jaw thrust outward. He made up his mind to get that job and, so help him, see that no trickery was done. It was Miette, of course, who made him so strongly partisan to the Metis people, though he told himself he was now forever shriven from thoughts of her. And now her shell piece was no longer in his pocket. He had

been conscious of it being there ever since Dan had thrust it upon his reluctant keep. "Take this, Tomison," Dan had said upon packing his belongings for leave taking. "She gave it to me—but it really should have been given *you*—it is yours—it isn't rightfully mine—because—I—I feel —," and then Dan had become strangely inarticulate as he always did, speaking of Miette. They never could—they never had spoken to one another of her. Thus Tom had come to possess Miette's shell which had hung beside Daniel's desk ever since her death.

* * * * *

It was mid-afternoon when the journey was resumed and Tom was walking up the hill road from the ferry landing across the river. He led Christopher. This took his weight off the load and made Grace Weldon feel less nervous.

At the post office there had been mail for him and several letters for Milly—two had English postmarking respectively addressed in Helene's and Dan's handwriting, and another letter was in the same hand as the letter addressed to himself. It was the unmistakable forceful scrawl of John Prudham.

Between a long interview with the land agent and a hasty lunch, Tom had opened this letter and scanned its contents. Later on, he would enjoy reading it over again when it wasn't likely to be read over his shoulder by an inquisitive lady seated behind. For the letter was mainly to stress Prudham's wish to keep the "*circumstances of the child's birth*" secret. "*Besides yourselves at the Hermitage, our physician, and the clergyman who brought the babe to you, no one knows.*" Could it mean that not even the father of the child knew? "*We are deeply indebted to you and Nurse Newbridge for having brought the babe to the care of good Christian parents—also, the news that the child had so providentially filled the empty arms of a bereaved young wife was received with a measure of joy by the child's mother —.*" He didn't refer

to Leetah as his *wife* that time, Tom observed. 'Leetah'—that adored wife of his, famous for her beauty and the mother of his six sons! Was the happiness of that union now wrecked? There was nothing in the tenor of the man's letter to presuppose this.

Tom had come to know Prudham, his father's friend. He had the vigour and buoyancy of a man confident of life, loved and beloved by his wife and sons. The visits he made at the Hermitage were of special interest to Tom since these were made on his periodic trips to and from England. For the father had taken each son with him in turn to attend school there when he attained the age of fifteen.

It was for this reason that he had left Lac la Biche in February of the year of the Indian uprising—William, the fourth son, went with him. It left Leetah with the two younger ones, aged seven and nine. When the rumours of rebellious Redmen were heard that winter and the husband thought to postpone travel abroad, Leetah had laughed him to scorn. She had lived with Indians in childhood—she spoke their language—she had no fear of them whatsoever. There were times when Jack realized with a measure of disquietude that Leetah was singularly intrigued by all things "Indian." Their lore and legend, with which she was familiar, was often recounted their children when younger at bedtime. At times, to amuse herself and them, too, she would clap her hands and gyrate in some form of pagan dance which would be at odd variance to her svelte costume of fine broadcloth. Jack would snatch her to him roughly then, in a little fear that he was losing her. For of Leetah, the impulsive and impetuous, he was never certain. From the very beginning of their strange and sudden marriage he had found her unpredictable emotions could blaze out vividly with a surprising ardour of love and as quickly change to one of displeasure for him.

Once upon returning from long months in the wilderness, tracing timber boundary limits, he had stood before her in great happiness at beholding her once more, when to his dismay she had actually recoiled, backed away, eyeing his

rough unkempt person with marked distaste. "Oh Jacque—Jacque! Such mud-dee boots—such an awful—terrible man—you —." She drew her hands before her, repelling him. Jack's heart sank—*she no longer wanted him*. Then in one swift second her arms were flung about him and he was being hugged with all the strength of her young body. He would feel again that rapturous bliss of their first connubial union.

The mystery of her origin was never solved. That year, after he had brought Leetah over the deep snow trail to the north post, the young factor made attempts to find his wife's parents. Only one clue offered. Among the Indian folk who came to trade at Lac la Biche was an old Woods Cree who, upon questioning, appeared to remember that a strange girl child had been captured from them in a skirmish with an enemy tribe. It was hardly of importance to him, a *girl* child, and many were lost or captured in such enemy encounters.

This Indian, whom Jack had only rarely seen at the Fort, sat and blinked his lizard-black eyes speculatively at his questioner. Was there going to be any *good* in giving replies to this young man's questions concerning his wife?

He had with him a young boy—a fine sturdy little fellow of seven years or more. The old man seemed very proud of this child. When Leetah was brought to the trading shop to meet these two she wavered in mind as to whether she knew the oldster, but exclaimed at once on seeing the boy: "Paulet! My leetle brother, Paulet!"

It was four years since she had seen him and he had grown, but she remembered caring for him as a babe. There followed a great many questions to learn more: Was Leetah his sister? No? Yes? Then where was the mother? Where was the father? The old Indian grunted monosyllabic replies. There was a sly levity in his manner over the anxiety with which the quest was being made. The boy who had favoured Leetah with a warm embrace, was more loquacious than his grandsire. His father, he told her, was a great *nobleman* who was far, far away, and his mother, the poor one, had drowned

in a river only last summer. Of names he knew not, nor would the grandfather offer any. Jack knew it was useless to probe further—as the answers would become only the more confusing and vague. Some other time he would learn more by following the old Indian to his distant camp and probe other members of his tribe.

Later when he interrogated other Indians he knew that they were becoming suspicious of him—they would look at Leetah, his honoured wife, and there would be much needless laughing between them. Why was the factor seeking her parents? they asked her. Leetah, herself, showed little desire to further the search. Paulet had told that the only parent she had known or remembered was drowned.

Then the following year Leetah's first child was born and all doubt as to whether Paulet was Leetah's blood brother was removed. The physician who had travelled several hundred miles over the water route¹ to be in attendance at the birth, assured the new father that his wife was not of Indian blood—she had given birth in the agonizing labour of a white woman. He estimated her age to be under sixteen. So the Indian daughter of the taciturn old Cree, Paulet's mother, who was drowned, could not have been the mother of Leetah. An idea formed in Jack's mind that the real parents of his wife may have been among those many Americans who trekked for California gold some sixteen years ago. Leetah, then an infant, was, in all likelihood, stolen from one of these unfortunate white families by this far wandering Cree tribe, bent on plunder.

As the years went by the Prudhams lived a happy family life. Paulet came to the post in later years with furs and fish for trade. He grew to surprising handsomeness, with a strong agile frame and features revealing the noble blood of his father.

Jack remembered the brothers "de Berriott"—noblemen from France—daring adventurers—explorers—more roving in their way of life than the Indians themselves. Was one of these

Paulet's so 'noble' father? He put the question bluntly to the youth on one of his infrequent visits to the post. "Ah, but of course you must have known that, surely?" So Paulet had answered with his engaging smile.

Leetah always gave him warmest welcome in their home, and the boys thought of him as a sort of uncle. He brought them gifts; carved objects in wood and mitts of rabbit fur. Once he brought Leetah an entire robe made of white rabbit pelts. Leetah adored the loose, feather-light garment and always after wore it in rising to attend their young babies on the long cold nights of winter. Jack, only partly awake, would see her going about in the early morning dark of their room looking like a moving wraith in the long, stark white robe. The skins were lined with odd bits of much washed faded calico print, painstakingly sewn together. Paulet was a little apologetic of his gift to an adored lady because of this, but Leetah insisted that it entirely pleased her as it was; better so than having the lining of costly satin; besides—could she not see there a remembered bit of an old dress she herself had worn as a child? Paulet was given a return gift of baked plum pudding—a huge one, made from an English recipe—and urged to visit the factor's family again.

On a much later visit, when the family friend had become a grown man, another gift was bestowed upon the factor's beautiful young wife, more unusual than the robe of fur. When Jack Prudham saw this old bejewelled cravat pin emblazoned with the de Berriott coat of arms, he demurred: "A lady, a gentlewoman—such as you are, does not accept a gift of jewelry from a man not her husband." He tried to dissuade acceptance of the present. Leetah's temper flared—and when aroused, her anger was quite formidable.

"A lay-deel! A lay-deel!" stormed Leetah in scorn, "I do not care for that one! You want me to insult"—Jack realized that nonacceptance of a gift *was* an insult to an Indian, "*— to hurt ou-ah vah-ree dec-ah, dec-ah Paulet!*"

In emotional stress her speech was more than ever tinged with the quaint admixture of accents from the nun teachers and her English husband.

It had not eluded Jack's hearing that she had said "*our* dear Paulet" rather than "*my* dear Paulet." And she had been amenable to carrying out so many irksome civilized customs to please him, regarding dress and deportment; he deemed it wise not to press opposition further. So the old cravat pin, which couldn't be worn because of its faulty fastening, lay tumbled among the Prudham family heirlooms. All were kept in Leetah's large metal jewel box which had been salvaged from a fire in far away England more than a quarter century ago.

The news that the Indian revolt of the Canadian west had reached dangerous proportions did not reach England until early May of that fateful year. Prudham, with his son William, had only completed the ocean crossing the week previous. The father made all possible haste for making his own immediate return. The earliest sailing available brought him back to Montreal in the middle of June. Travelling west, he heard on all hands the story of the Duck Lake Massacre—told and retold, and all manner of sinister rumours persisted regarding what happened in the North. "*Lac la Biche? They burned the whole place and took the women—one woman rode out all the way from there to Edmonton with her babies tied² on the back of the horse —.*" Jack cursed himself for ever having left his family, and anxiety increased on the long slow travel inland.

There was gruesomeness in his home coming. It was in the dark of night. The place was entirely deserted. The house had been ransacked and havoc was revealed everywhere. Broken glass, dishes and clothing lay heaped upon the floors. Some of Leetah's fine dresses of silk and velvet lay bedraggled and strewn about. Not a vestige of food remained in the kitchen, cupboards gaped and kettles were gone. There was a huge charred pile—remnants of a fire in the middle of the

fortified enclosure. Portions of burned chairs, feather pillows and bedsteads protruded from this.

The distrait man finally ceased calling Leetah's name and sank to the floor in despair. The padre, who was one of the party accompanying him, tried to console and hearten him:

"Rest, Prudham, until light, then we'll start a search for them." This they did. The three men rode out at dawn in diverse direction. None found a trace of them. The few half-breeds Jack met in his travels were wary and sullen. They knew *nothing* of the plundered post, nor of his wife and family. Did *he* know anything of Riel who was in prison? Were they going to hang him?

After three days of fruitless search, the men knew they must go still further afield. Jack prepared himself for long journeying. There had been one deep cellar cache the Indians hadn't found. In it was good rum and some pemmican. Fortified with supply, Jack struck out west from the lake and on to the North. The second day out, there was rain. Though it was July, it was a cold, continuous falling. The man was drenched and shivering as he continued on through the boggy wilderness. A sort of frenzy possessed him to go on and on—he scarcely rested more. When the rain lessened, mosquitoes tormented him. Doggedly he kept on his way searching everywhere for signs of fresh trails, stray Indians or an encampment. The horse now often stumbled upon rocks and deep pot holes between.

Once both he and beast nearly drowned fording a swollen river. After, Jack found himself lying upon the opposite shore not even knowing how he came there. His coat was gone and when he found his horse the bag of supplies was no longer on the saddle. Weak, hungry and dazed by the heat of a blazing sun, he rode on and on, finally lost count of days. It was no longer clear in his mind where he was or what direction he was going. It was the horse who led now. The beast plodded steadily, wearily on, and one day came upon the faint track of an old pitching trail that led upon less

wild and rough terrain. This finally brought them to a high lying meadow among hills. Here was a turbulent running stream and along its bank were the big, decorated tepees of a Cree tribe. It was after sundown and lazy scrolls of smoke were winding up to the sky above the peaceful scene. Jack saw it as a dream. Some Indian folk surrounded him. He dismounted—saw that Lester, his young son, was among them—Paulet's height stood behind—the staring eyes of the other son were there, too—and then he saw Leetah, a strange, brown-skinned Leetah in Indian garb. He heard her quick calling of his name. No—it was not an illusion, though the voice was far, far away. He reached to touch her—felt her encircling arms about him, and then fell in a dead faint.

* * * * *

An illness so serious and prolonged followed his finding Leetah and the boys that it blotted out life for some months. Sometimes in the long weeks of delirium he felt again he was drowning in the terrible current of that river and would never reach the shore to find his loved ones. He would cry in anguish and then hear her: "Jacque, Jacque, I am here—so near you—see me?" And then he would feel her trailing fingers across his face and smell the sweet scent of her hair as she bent over him. It was as though a silken cord was drawing him gently back to life once more.

Then by midwinter he was back home once more—a convalescent. The house was tidied and repaired, though somewhat denuded of furniture. They laid rug skins upon chests and strong packing cases and they sufficed for chairs to sit upon.

Jack looked fondly at his two boys. They had been brought from the mission school to spend the Yuletide season at home. While Leetah cared for him they would remain in residence at the school with the padre. The boys were looking well

—the summer out of doors had browned them, made them sturdier looking. They asked if Paulet were coming for a Christmas visit. They liked Paulet. And well they might, thought Jack, he had rescued them from torture and probable death that spring—coming so providentially at the time of that attack upon the post by bloodthirsty, crazed Indians. Paulet had brought ponies, too, for all of them and they had been whisked away and escaped unscathed.

In wonder Jack heard them speaking of that long tortuous ride to Paulet's camp. The sun had smiled upon them all the way and they had had so excellent a guide. They described the scenic beauty of their fascinating journey in the sylvan wilderness with all the nostalgic yearning of urbanites recalling a summer spent in the country. With a pang Jack realized that he had never fulfilled his promise to take Leetah to that far northern lake region which had been the scene of her childhood. In having made her so satisfactorily all that a wife of his should be, by providing her with fine raiment and the excellent tutorage of the mission school nuns, he had thought Leetah, as well, had found life fulfilled.

Now he remembered her scornful "Poof!" when told of the high admiration given her by Sir James B—— on that august gentleman's being their guest at dinner. The high military dignitary had, indeed, nearly dropped the pipe he held in his astonishment when she had entered their candle lit 'salon' wearing her trailing velvet gown and the Prudham amethysts that so perfectly matched it in color. When the gentleman had recovered his composure he found that his beautiful hostess conversed with greater fluency in French than in the English tongue, and this with the impeccable accent of Leetah's tutor, a "d'Ouville" of France. The extreme deference with which Sir James had treated his wife had pleased and flattered the young factor immensely. He was, of course, that 'lucky dog' that gentleman had said him to be.

And she was as youthfully beautiful now as then, Jack noted, watching her in merry chatter with the boys. She was still in

her thirties and now much fuller, more mature of form. She had a rare gift for mimicry, too, and some of this was now being displayed for their entertainment. She began enacting that marauding Indian who had surprised her in her bedroom. From cosmetic jars on her dressing table she painted grotesque markings upon her face and began, in pantomime, flinging out all objects on the dressing table through the window. Then she stalked with swift, jerking gait to the toilet table—took an enormous bite from a cake of soap thereon—grimaced horribly and spat it out—(here the younger boy's laughter became shrill)—next she opened a lower compartment of the commode—looked in, evinced sudden, agreeable surprise, lifted out the chamber and held it up admiringly, mouthing a harsh corruption of Cree and saying as did that Indian: "Ah—Ah! At last we have it! The greatest, finest, most glorious loving cup^s of all—from which our noble chief shall drink!" She raised it higher in both hands—tilted it—

"Leetah! Leetah—!" The father protested, and found himself laughing too, while the boys were rocking and shrieking in the lusty glee of school boys. What an amazing woman! Making comedy of a situation which had come near being a massacre for them all. Nor was there ever allusion to their terror at the time of the Indian attack upon their home. Neither fear nor fearsomeness were dwelt upon by Leetah in bringing up her boys. In this she had retained the Indian ideal of motherhood for sons. Life, mused her husband, would never be dull for him, nor them, with her near. She could make them laugh. Hers was a real capacity for the gaiety in life.

Another month passed with the boys back to the school. Leetah missed them—it was so quiet in the house with just old Mary cooking in the kitchen and her husband often away, now that his former robust strength had returned. Her footsteps lagged and her spirits were dull. Coming home from a short sojourn Jack realized that he could no longer evade the truth regarding his wife; she was once more with child. In

late February Leetah gave birth to a baby—a girl—the child of Paulet de Berriott.

The doctor and Jack Prudham looked at the ruddy infant upon its pillow and both saw the unmistakable resemblance to the father. Jack's face was as strained and white as during his illness. There had been no peace of mind for him since he had known. He suffered excruciating mental anguish. The doctor, who had been a close friend of the family since the first son was born, gave his former patient a keen professional scrutiny. *God, the man is going to sink into a relapse if he doesn't pull himself together—I've given him enough sedatives to keep him asleep for all time.* His hand went on Jack's shoulder. "Look here, man, this does not spell disaster—not at all! Brought up in another family, this child may one day bring joy to the world for many. It will be hard for the mother—at first—though you should rejoice that *she's* well and not kicking up a damned fuss!"

Plans had been made on those long sleepless nights when he had talked until early hours with the padre and sometimes with the physician. It was the padre who had thought of Milly Newbridge and her hospital—"The 'little Pauline' can be professionally cared for there," he said, "until old enough for school attendance or—adoption." For on this point Jack Prudham had been adamant—that this child should not be brought up in his home with his own family. His older sons—the eldest a young man now—should know of this birth come to *them*! It was unendurably humiliating. In the intolerant judgment of youth they might come to thinking disrespect of their mother! Leetah, he knew, had no sense of guilt in what had occurred, and for this he was somehow thankful. In her simple straightforward way she had accepted her protector and loved companion as her husband.

The Anglican padre, who had, less than a year ago, seen Jack despairing at the loss of his wife and boys, now came into the room. This, he thought, is the very spot he stood on, then! He too, was alarmed at the stricken look of his friend—the

factor. He engaged Jack at once in the many practical details and arrangements necessary for his journey. The cariole was packed and ready. Since Canon Newbridge had not returned from England it was necessary for him to visit Fort Edmonton more often than formerly. He was leaving on the morrow and the baby was to accompany him in care of the doctor. They discussed trails, stopping places, and the monetary details regarding the child's keep.

"And this can be,—if you wish it so,—done in secret," he assured Jack. "No one *need* know," added the doctor.

There was healing relief in the thought. Tomorrow he would bring the two boys home—that would help Leetah.

Before the boys Leetah was her usual self—but at night he knew she was weeping beside him—she had thought him asleep and was crying that devastatingly, secret, silent way, in a helpless grief that is the more pitiful because it hides itself, asking no consolation from another. And feeling this, Jack could not bear it longer. *It is a heinous thing—this cruel thing I have done to her!*

"Oh Leetah—Leetah, don't!" he cried aloud. Emotion that had been pent up for weeks was released now. "I can't forgive myself for making you grieve like this. Oh, why did you care for me—make me well? Better I had died—died——!"

And Leetah, listening to her husband's agonized speech, became quite still. She drew him to her softly, cradled his head and stroked it with gentle fingers. "Jacque, be still—be still! You must not say such words—nevair, nevair!" Her voice was tender but firm, like that of a mother to an erring child. Her arms encircled his shaking shoulders, he felt her hair falling softly against his face.

"There is no-thing to forgive, Jacque, only you must not leave me, evair, evair ——."

"Never, *never*, Leetah," came Jack's voice muffled against her.

Her voice came more calmly—dreamily slow: "And when you—go—far—I must go—with you ——."

"Always—always," was his answering sigh.

In their sorrow they had pledged anew a vow to cleave to one another for as long as life would last.

* * * * *

The slanting sunlight was gleaming brightly upon the old canvas-topped buggy as they skirted the Hudson farm. Tom wondered idly if Jim's horse, that the Indians had stolen, recovered or died. It had been found straying alone last month, starved down to skin and bone.

A faint mewling sound came from the baby. "Shhh—shh—sh," murmured the woman, shaking the basket gently.

"All right?" asked Tom, turning around.

"Oh, yes, only it's gone past her feeding time. But she can wait—we're pretty near home now. She's a good little thing—she never 'fusses'."

"She's a good little thing—she never fusses!" How aptly these words could have described Miette, too! Tom thought.

Presently they were travelling the trail that went north and east from LeGrand's ravine. The sun had set upon the horizon behind them. A few clouds above glowed with radiance left upon the sky. A day of peace and beauty was at its close.

At dusk they neared the Weldon farmstead. They could see a light from the house and hear the dogs barking. Grace Weldon gave a long sigh. She was beginning to get cold in spite of all the blankets Milly Newbridge had wrapped about her—and cramped too.

Big Jake Weldon came to meet them as they drove upon the yard. The dogs welcomed them wildly, circling and jumping about Christopher.

"—Oh—Jake!" bleated the young wife as her husband's brawny arms lifted her to the ground. All the pain and heart-ache of the weeks since parting was in the cry. She leaned weakly against him. Jake kicked the lunging dogs away and carried her, blankets and all, into the house. Tom followed, holding high the sleeping infant in its blanket—the child of Leetah Prudham and the "breed," Paulet.



Chapter Thirteen

A Scourging Prairie Fire

LITTLE Betty Hudson woke up on the morning of her birthday and saw she was alone in the room. Mother was already up. The middle of her pillow showed a deep, round, pressed-in place and the covers were thrown in crooked heaps.

Betty slid from her small bed and her bare feet padded across the floor to the hallway. She looked to see if her older brothers,

Rog and Ben, were still upstairs. But their bed was empty too. No need looking for Cliff, the oldest, he got up early, like papa did. The little towhead went sharply sidewise to hear of sounds downstairs. It brought one tightly braided pigtail to standing straight up.

She could hear nothing from below. An impish grin suddenly spread over her childish features. She *knew*—"birthday" surprises! They were all just waiting for her to come down, when they would grab her quick and thump her—"one—two—three—four—one to grow on—one to marry—one to be happy." On the dining-room table she would see a pink frosted cake that mommy promised to bake, maybe with candles on top to blow. Here Betty's head nodded hard, reassuring herself. They had found nine eggs in the hens' nests yesterday, and that was plenty, mommy said. Just last night she had said all that while they stood outside looking at the prairie fire. It made everything on the yard, the strawbarn, privy, and henhouse show as light as day. Then mommy's hand in hers had gone limp while they watched the bright red fire upon the dark sky. Betty had to shake her hand to make her talk more. But when she did, it wasn't about the cake or the candles at all. "That fire is 'way across the river," she had said, "the wind can only blow the smoke here and that won't hurt *anybody*." Betty guessed she was somewhat afraid, because papa was away. Had Betty heard her mother's moan of fear upon rising in the night to view that fiery sky once more, she would have known for certain. But Betty had slept the deep sleep of childhood during all the disturbances of the night.

Now she ran to the clothes closet where her best red cashmere dress hung. She could dress herself. Somehow the dress was brought down from its peg and then "Sunday" shoes were fetched from a box standing beneath. After admiring and stroking their glossy surface, they were put on too. Soon she was all ready to go downstairs with face washed, hair tidied, and everything done.

With careful mincing step she approached the stairs, then

trod each one tip-toe lest new shoes give out tell-tale squeaks. Still no sound came from the family below.

Coming to the kitchen door, the little girl in all her birthday finery stood a few seconds, bracing herself for anticipated surprises to follow. Eyes a-light, tingling all over, she flung the door open.

Nothing happened. No one was there. No grabbing—no thumping—no sniggers from the teasing brothers. The kitchen opened before her, quiet, chill and dimmed by drawn blinds—and the stove—Betty had never seen the stove like that—stood cold, black and silent in its corner. Always this stove had radiated warmth with steam rising from noisy pots and kettles.

"Mommy!"

No answer.

She walked to the dining room. There, too, it was bleak and the table had only the tall kerosene lamp centred upon a dark chenille cover—no cake, no candles.

"R—o-ger—Cliff—ford!" She called out with all her might. But still there wasn't an answering voice, only a "woo-oo-o" from the wind outside, blowing around the house. Looking out, Betty saw that it was smoky outside; smoke that "didn't hurt anybody."

"*Mom-mee-ee*, where *are* you?" with voice going a bit unsteady.

This time she heard some sound of reply. From the direction of the kitchen came loud, anxious mewings of a young kitten. Betty flew back and saw that their wee black kitten, "Patty," had climbed from her box back of the stove and now sprawled pathetically upon the floor, groping this way and that upon weakly outstretched paws. Betty picked up the kitten and held it close. "Poor, *poor* Patty."

"Ye-aow-ye-aow—YE-AOW." Patty's claws dug deep into the red dress.

"Poor Patty, all alone and so hungry—your bad, bad mommy sneaking away. Renal! You mean, sleek smarty cat-mother!"

Betty was tearfully angry now. "She's gone away to Mazeppa—to LeGrands—that's where she's gone. They're all gone away!"

Yesterday Mrs. LeGrand had put Mazeppa, Patty's "brother" cat, in a paper sack, punched a hole in the paper with her finger and carried him away home. She had laughed aloud when they told her they'd named the wide-headed "boy" kitten after her big black horse. "Yes, Mrs. Hudson, I *would* like that kitten," then off she had gone on her horse with Mazeppa's pink nose sticking out of the hole in the sack, and Rena, the "sleek, smart, mother-cat" just sat and looked the other way—she didn't *care*.

"She's sneaked away and she doesn't care," Betty now told Patty, the deserted kitten, with a quivering chin. "Gone to LeGrands—everybody's gone—gone to LeGrands." The hard lump rising in her throat nearly choked her. She wanted a drink to swallow it down and away. But the water pails were gone—even the pig pails¹ with "skim" milk weren't there any more.

Still clutching the frantically clawing Patty, Betty turned the knob of the door leading outside. It burst open with the force of the wind. She couldn't close it, so just ran on in the direction of the path to LeGrands—where "everyone" would be. She found the hoof marks of Mrs. LeGrand's horse that led across the soft furrowed field and followed them, running hard. Pretty soon she couldn't see the house she left behind because of the smoke, and her new shoes got dustier and dustier from the furrowed soil.



The Hudsons' nearest neighbours were the LeGrands, whose broad log ranch house was situated over a mile away on one of the ravine slopes to the river.

Waking somewhat late that morning, Agnes threw back the red blanket covering of her bunk and rose at once to dress.

She stopped midway while reaching for garb lying on a chair nearby to sniff the morning air. Smoke, she decided, was worse. The wind was stronger too. But the jodhpurs and belt were fastened about the trim waist without hurry. The fire was *across the river*.

Agnes, now past forty, had retained the slenderness of her girlhood, to which the married years had brought only a more becoming roundness to limb and cheek. A heightened colour, that had come with more than a decade of healthy outdoor life, added comeliness to her distinguished features.

She continued brushing her thick long hair vigorously, venting an impatience of mood with every stroke of the brush.

"Lord, another day of beast-ly—*howling* wind —," said Agnes, the pale sunbleached strands snapping and rising well electrified by the energetic wielding of her brush, "— and those everlasting grass fires about! How do the dratted things start—Indian devilishness—careless land surveyors, or the railway workmen? And where, what with these damned fires and settlers plowing up all the land about—are horses to find grazing?" This question was becoming more of a problem each year for the ranching LeGrands. *Fence laws*—and the whole countryside filling with European immigrants;² Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Poles—you knew their farmsteads by huge sun-flowers nodding over twig fences in front. Agnes tossed the hair brush into an open drawer of the chest before her and slammed it shut with a shove from her slim knee—and you knew their women too—thick-set, barefooted, bent over from much toil and childbearing, while all about them swarmed an over abundant brood of children. *Children!* All the neighbours had them: the Hudsons, the Weldon woman further beyond had just had her third. Only Alec and she remained childless. Agnes secretly longed for a child—just a son of their own. There had been times in the past years when she had known herself to be with child, but only to have her hopes dispelled later and herself left feeling wretchedly weak and dispirited. The last time she was like that Alec had even

brought the doctor from town. His visit was brief. The tired man's eyes—a trifle bloodshot—strayed to the liquor flask that was kept on their cupboard shelf. There the glance held. He had listened with an attitude of near indifference to her recital—"Perhaps, if you gave up your strenuous riding, Mrs. LeGrand ——?"

Give up riding, indeed! Agnes' steady grey eyes had fixed coldly upon the physician. He was not called to the LeGrand ranch again.

Now her strong slim fingers drew back her shining hair into a firm knot at the back of her head. She strode across the room to the window.

The big log-walled room that covered most of the cabin's space, served as living room, saddle storing room, as well as bedroom. In the far corner stood an exact counterpart of her own bunk—Alec's bunk—in neat unoccupied state. Both beds during the day were overspread with shining black cowhides. These, with the scattering of bear and wolf skins upon a dark stained floor, gave the room quite a handsome appearance. There were chairs and tables made of birch limbs that Alec had built himself. A large stone fireplace opened in the middle of the inside wall between the two bunks, which they had built in the first flush of home making enthusiasm attending their early married years. They had selected each stone for its special beauty of colour or imbedded fossils. The fine drawer-chest of dark walnut was the only elegant piece of furniture the room could boast; and was also the sole relic Agnes possessed of her native English home. Atop this stood a solid silver chalice, exquisitely wrought and emblazoned with the LeGrand family crest. "It came from grandpa's home, south," was all Alec would say of it. Now this family trophy, his tidy bunk, the souging swoosh of the wind without; all cried aloud that she was alone—a childless woman approaching middle age and alone. True it was, that Alec's absence was necessitated to augment a gradually decreasing income from the horse raising. He now drove the weekly stage from Edmon-

ton to the railway junction south with their best and strongest team. "Yes," Agnes had readily acquiesced, "of course I'm capable of looking after the rest of the herd myself—if you hire some man to care for Mazeppa"—and Alec had done this as soon as snow left the ground. She had seen that man only occasionally from her kitchen window when leading their blooded stallion to and from the stable for its countryside travels. Alec spoke highly of his hire, a tall dark Metis newly come from the North country. He had given Alec invaluable help, too, in fencing the big pasture with its long narrow causeway leading directly into the river for watering the herd.

With the fence done Alec was free to stay in town and earn the needed extra money—doing that driving he so loved to do. Each trip had a certain adventure: travellers—new people with a story from the outside world, and brought west by the railroad that had been so disappointingly routed through the southerly town of Calgary, and so on to the coast, crossing the Rockies over the more difficult high altitude of Kicking Horse Pass. In turn, Alec's stage coach passengers were intrigued by his splendid figure, his confidence and ease in handling the horses, and the occasional snatches of song that came from the lips of their handsome driver. Women passengers, Agnes knew were always charmed by her husband's chivalrous attitude, his physical attractiveness. With these thoughts Agnes felt an added discontent of mind. Her eyes brooded over the smoke-laden view from her front window. The smoke was more yellowish, thicker than she had ever known it before. She could scarcely see the river, much less the Hermitage that usually stood out in bold relief on the opposite bank. At this point the river ran a course due north, with the bank across lying directly west of their homestead.

The Hermitage might be threatened this day by the fire over on the west bank, Agnes thought, and was relieved by the thought that it was now tenanted by a farmer with three stalwart sons. Nurse Newbridge was safely returned to England.

The wind, she observed, had changed, and was coming from the south-east—blowing quite a gale. This being the case, why was it bringing such heavy smoke from a fire that was *west*, across the river? Then suddenly it dawned upon Agnes LeGrand that this prairie fire smoke was no longer coming from a fire that was safely across the river, but from one on the south side, their *own* side of the river. A stab of fear ran straight through her. She turned from the window and ran into the kitchen where a window faced south towards town and the neighbouring Hudson homestead. From this window it was at once apparent that a fire was indeed fast approaching upon them with a high wind. Between the lifts of smoke she glimpsed that hated plowed strip which she had watched Jim Hudson and his son Cliff bring closer daily—furrow by furrow, towards their fenced pasture. Scarcely a half mile width of unbroken prairie now lay between the two. And a ferocious wind was racing a fire towards that dry, grassed strip and their fenced-in horses! *The horses!* Agnes ran back to the big room, brought down her saddle from its peg with a clatter and betook herself with all speed out to the barn where Bluebell was stabled. She said an inward prayer of thanks that Mazeppa was away with the man, Paulet. Now one purpose only was uppermost in mind: to drive the pastured horses—some twenty-odd head—away from the path of the fire, down the runway into the river.

Bluebell whinnied anxiously as Agnes saddled her with trembling haste—the mare had sensed the danger. In a trice woman and horse were racing across the rolling pasture in search of the herd. Agnes scarcely gave a thought to the cabin she had left—she knew that the dug garden plot surrounding it would afford some protection. The acrid smoke seared her eyeballs and throat as she rode into the wind towards the far end of the pasture. There wasn't a moment to lose now. Bluebell was urged to a gallop, gasping and choking with the smoke in her lungs. Then ahead in the furthestmost corner of the fence Agnes spied the huddled mass of horses. Praise be, the herd was together!

Agnes began to shout in excitement. She needed only to turn them and run them along that fence to reach the runway to the river and safety. She came shrieking at them—lashing at their rumps with a riding whip—to start them off. *It did not make them go!* Twenty-two slim sleek bodies crowded into the fence corner—cringing and quivering under the lash—swaying a little from side to side, but not one turning from that fearsome thing they faced. Agnes even kicked at them, screamed herself hoarse, thrashed their bodies, striking until her crop was broken to bits. Blood ran down their dark flanks. They only shrank more closely together inside their corner.

The woman, now desperate, and looking like a fury with her loosened hair flying in the wind, wheeled Bluebell about to charge upon them. The useless crop handle flopped at her wrist—she stripped off her coat to fling it savagely across those undulating backs each time the courageous Bluebell ran hard against them. Not even this could start them. They only folded in on one another again more grimly fast than ever in an abject frozen fear.

Once more the well-nigh crazed Bluebell was jerked around for a running charge upon the herd. This time Agnes wheeled back in a still wider circle to come upon the pack with an utmost telling force. While making the turn she saw a heavy black plume of smoke rise from one of the hay stacks which stood not far beyond the fenced pasture. Their precious hay was burning! Leaping tongues of orange-pink flame darted from out the billowing smoke, swift, like a rattler's fangs. Then while urging her mount to speed the final run, she was faced with an even greater foretelling of disaster; for running across that grassed strip in direct path of the on-coming fire, was the little, brightly clad figure of a child.

"God!" breathed Agnes. "One of Harriet's brood!"

Then Agnes LeGrand did a thing that proved the real nobility within her: without a second's hesitation she had veered from her course upon her precious horses and was riding straight as an arrow into the teeth of a fire-laden wind

to that small smoke-enveloped figure. In one flying leap she had taken Bluebell over the barbed wire fence and was galloping on to the rescue of Betty Hudson. While steadying control of the mare after the beast's heroic leap over the pasture fence, Agnes saw that another was bent on the rescue of the child. For, lunging from the plowed strip came the great clumsy Bill and Bess, a plow hitched behind them springing fantastically from side to side at their heels. Hanging onto the lines was Clifford, coming at a hard run. Between the smoke clouds, Agnes saw him overtake his little sister and snatch her up to him while still clinging desperately to the team. But the effort became too great—he stumbled, fell forward, and Agnes saw the girl's body roll away from his grasp to the ground.

She was still inert from the shock of the fall when Agnes reached where the child lay. Then events succeeded in such great rapidity that they would always remain confused in Agnes LeGrand's mind. Somehow she had Betty gripped across her saddle and was galloping back towards the river. Smoke and searing heat were now blinding and only when a sudden lifting and clearing came, did she see what was before her. Once Cliff was being dragged by the plow team, and then again he was lying prone on the grass. Agnes found herself crying despairingly: "Oh, Cliff! Cliff—run—run!" She saw him scramble uncertainly to his feet then, and begin a loping run on his long lanky legs just as she came tearing by. Somewhere ahead she heard the pounding hooves of Bill and Bess who were now out of control—runaways. "Oh God," sobbed Agnes, "they're going straight into the barbed fence —."

But then a truly remarkable thing happened, for as that madly galloping team neared the pasture, they veered and ran parallel to the fence instead. Perhaps they glimpsed the dark cluster of horses that were still strained against the corner, while those sensitive, fear-locked thoroughbreds had felt the ground vibrating to the thunderous beat of approaching hooves. The pack wavered, swayed, loosened and fell apart. One head

turned, slid along the fence, another horse sidled out sidewise and started to run; then all were off like a ribbon of fluid dark along the fence leading into the river. Instinct had bade them follow those stampeding hooves—wherever they led.

Agnes found herself screeching at the top of her lungs in a sort of wild exultation and she kept this up—even after the horses and all had reached the safety of the river. Before her stood Betty, face besotted, gulping and jerking with sobs. Bill and Bess were a comic pair; now held firmly by trees along the shore that had entangled their plow harness. At once Cliff appeared over the top of the embankment. Utterly exhausted, he all but fell down the path to them. His face was black and swollen—his eyes were streaming. One of the horse herd pawed the river shallows nervously and the splash of water struck Agnes full in the face. It stopped her hysterical screeching abruptly.

Cliff dropped to his knees at the water's side and laved his burning face. He had been fighting the fire ever since his mother wakened him, long before dawn. Harriet had wakened from her uneasy sleep in the middle of the night to find the sky livid and the fire apparently right upon them—she had roused the boys and they had all gone to the south-east end of the farm to plow guards and save their hay. They had taken every available bucket and sack to aid their fight—Harriet even grabbing the swill pails in her panic. While plowing furrows and burning the grass strips between, they had all watched the dreaded blaze approaching in the high wind. They had worked like mad—"Oh, Cliff, plow here, and here—another furrow, deeper, deeper—you know what Dad said—'with a high wind, a guard can't be too wide.'" So Cliff had plowed and plowed and his mother and two brothers had beaten out the flaming grass for backfiring that was constantly threatening to jump the furrows with the wind.

After sun-up the fire looked less forbidding, but the smoke got worse. Finally the flames ran right up to their guards and encircled their farm, and then, could they once more breathe

freely. At once Harriet had run to the house that stood on a slight rise of land a half mile away. Cliff, with the team and the younger brothers, followed more slowly. All were spent from their strenuous efforts in the fight. Then coming up to the yard they were shocked to see their mother in a state of inarticulate frenzy. She could only motion, wave arms wildly towards the plowed field and the LeGrand's beyond. Cliff had known at once that it was Betty. He, too, had gone on a run after her without even stopping to unhitch the plow—he had struck up the horses and run as fast as he could to overtake his sister whom he saw running directly into the path of the prairie fire.

Now Agnes LeGrand was mopping Betty's face with a piece from her torn blouse sleeve. "Stop blubbering, child—you're not hurt!" said Agnes, forgetting that she, herself, had only just regained control. "What's that? Your 'mawm-mee'—your kitty—your *birthday*? Well, be happy, it might jolly well have been your last. I say, Cliff, we'd better be getting her back to your mother at once . . ."

On the bluff above, the pale yellow smoke billowed out strongly and then receded. In a matter of minutes the fire had swept beyond the LeGrand place as well.

Then Agnes washed Bluebell too—dipping her cloth in the river. The mare was foam-flecked, streaked with dried perspiration; an ugly welt showed on the sleek rump. The sharp edge of her broken crop had inflicted this to urge that jump over the barbed fence. Agnes' eyes filled, she laid her cheek against the heaving side of her beloved horse. "Oh, Bluebell," she choked, "I'll never, *never* strike you again—nor ride you so hard either."

The blackened prairie was still warm underfoot as they walked back to the Hudson yard. Harriet had come part way to meet them. She was much overwrought and so relieved at seeing Betty safe with Agnes on Bluebell that she chattered like one possessed. "Oh! I just *felt inside* she was gone, even before I went upstairs—but when I saw her empty bed—and

then looked out the window—stars! You *just can't imagine*, Mrs. LeGrand! Then I knew I couldn't get to her in time—why, I saw the fire coming right down that strip—and oh! I was nearly out of my mind—right out of my mind—just ask Cliff and the boys how——.”

Cliff interjected: “Mom, if Mrs. LeGrand hadn't ——.”

“—Then I ran downstairs and saw Cliff bringing back the team, and then I couldn't *talk*—just couldn't tell'm anything! I nearly died trying to say ——.” Cliff started: “It was Mrs. LeGrand” But Harriet was beyond listening: “—— and poor Cliff, he must have been dead tired—why, we'd been fighting fire for hours over near the stacks ——.”

Coming up the hill they noticed a strange wagon and team was in the yard. The shabby vehicle had apparently just gone through fire and water, with wheels wet and dunnage atop showing charred black spots. Some men stood about. One of them, undersized and fidgety, was wearing a new, befringed, bead-bedizened leather suit of the “Indian cowboy” variety. The stiff, ill-fitting garment went badly with the narrow shoulders and prominent eye-glasses of the wearer. Upon closer approach Agnes heard that voluble gentleman's speech, which bore the unmistakable accents of that of a native from her own country.

“It's that new Englishman,” Harriet was saying. “Jim says he's going in for stock raising—he's *Lord Ard*—something 'r other.” Her voice dropped as they came nearer the man. Harriet recognized the other man there who stood quietly by and was obviously ill at ease. He was a brother of Jake Weldon, who had just sold this intrepid, would-be “*rawnchah*” one of his horse team, the bony gelding on the left.

The English lord had insisted upon this latest purchase being given a “trial” drive with one horse already owned, a decrepit white mare. When overtaken by the prairie fire they had barely gained a refuge in a nearby slough. They found Muchias, the dwarf, already there among the reeds—where he was picking up spent and befuddled rabbits with his bare

hands. Now these crawled half dead at his feet—in tow and firmly leashed with babiche. Muchias had made the most of a prairie fire's opportunities.

Now the two groups mingled and were talking excitedly about the fire—Harriet essayed an introduction: "Mrs. LeGrand, meet Mister—ah——. Oh! I guess it's really *Lord* ——?"

"Not at all, Mistress Hudson, not at all! I'm only a rawnching cowboy naow"—and he almost jerked a bow towards Agnes who had remained mounted on her horse. Agnes continued to look down at him with whole-hearted contempt. Titles no longer meant much to her. Life on the Saskatchewan with Alec LeGrand had brought a new sense of values.

Then all resumed accounts of recent harrowing experiences—Harriet's tale of the runaway Betty gaining precedence. Cliff, holding Bill and Bess, broke in here: "My team got away—and I was sure glad to see Mrs. LeGrand coming licketty split——." "Oh, yes, Cliff, we had a bit of difficulty with the horses, didn't we," cut in Agnes, hastily. *They had a bit of difficulty with the horses!* All started again to talk.

"I guess Mom didn't see that you ——." He stopped, no one was listening. Cliff cleared his throat, opened his lips again to try once more and then gave up.

"So you've begun your horse buying to begin a ranch?" It was Harriet addressing his Lordship.

"Eoh, yes, yes—one must begin, one cawn't wait fawevah, yeow kneow!"

All looked dubiously at his "beginnings." It seemed to Harriet that an alarmed look came into the mare's widened eyes with their lashes all singed away by fire. Muchias studied the newly-bought gelding with a careful, knowing scrutiny, and then looked up pointedly at the owner of "Mazeppa the Great." His look of sober concern was suddenly altogether too much for Harriet. She sank helplessly to the ground, throwing her apron over her face to cover uncontrollable laughter.

And Betty tried to pull the apron away to see whether her mother was laughing or crying.

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Riding home slowly over still smoking bits of turf, Agnes felt a depressing weariness come over her. Not even coming in sight of the ranch house and seeing it untouched by the fire uplifted her jaded spirits. Four long rectangular smouldering mounds of black over in the distance were all that was left of their hay. The fire would go on burning the grass for miles around until quenched by rain. What could they do for horse feed? Should she move into the village, give up the horse breeding? Live in the stultifying atmosphere of the small town,—"Ladies' Aid" and gossip? Heaven forbid! Better to move North where there was still elbow room, and this time secure *legally* a great block of land. The man Paulet was from the North country. I must ask him regarding the ranching conditions there, thought Agnes.

Coming across their wide potato field which had saved their house and stables, Agnes heard Mazeppa's strong-throated whinny. Then Paulet must have returned him while she was at Hudsons. Now he was coming from the stallion's stable to offer assistance with her mount. Being spent, Agnes was grateful. This time she saw him at close distance. He would be in his thirties, she guessed, and certainly had a striking appearance. No ordinary half-breed this, with his erect carriage and handsome, brooding face. Remarkable grace of manner, too. His hands had a deft sureness in helping her dismount and he bowed with an old-world gallantry to her order: "Give her water and oats." Agnes was faintly astonished. No wonder Alec lauded him so highly.

Paulet led Bluebell off to her stable and Agnes came indoors. She dropped into a chair exhausted. It was nearly noon, and she hadn't eaten that day. She wanted her tea, but lacked

the energy to build a fire. Her throat was parched with thirst, and there wasn't fresh water in from the well. Whiskey was on the cupboard shelf. Though she rarely indulged in strong drink, she wanted that liquor now. Half closing her eyes, she rested a while, awaiting return of energy, and remained sprawled in the arm chair. Her hair still hung loose and her blouse sleeves dangled from her arms, ripped to ribbons from wrist to shoulder. Finally she rose with an effort, and reached for the bottle.

A knock came at the door. "Come in!"

Paulet stood there holding her saddle. "You wish it hung inside, Madame?"

"Yes, on that second peg, please."

On quick impulse she took another glass down from the shelf. "Join me, Paulet, I want a talk with you."

Paulet hung up the saddle, held his wide felt hat and hesitated briefly, watching her fill the glasses on the table. Then again he bowed formally. "I thank you." He came towards the table and she motioned him to a chair across.

"You come from the North, tell me —." She felt the liquid go cooling down her throat and then warm her all over, reviving her strongly. Listening to Paulet's replies, she drank more from her glass. The North had much to offer, yes, but there was needed much money—many men—to bring forth its wealth. He, himself, was going to the east—mayhap even across the water—to procure means. It was worth it. His tongue was loosening with the whiskey—she saw his glass empty and refilled it—refilled her own. She forgot her hunger—her thirst—the terrible happenings of the day became nebulous, far away. Paulet and a dream of the future was real. She looked at the dark, mysterious person across the table from her and his supple brown fingers clasped upon the neck of his glass. He had a graceful figure—an elegant hand—and following it up she noticed how the blue veins contrasted against a pale skin in the crook of the elbow. Strangely, his eyes were grey under the heavy overhanging brows.

"You—you are *Indian*?" queried Agnes as simply as a child.

Paulet paused in reply. "Mixed blood—my mother was Cree, my father, Frenchman.

A gloomy silence, then: "The mixed blood," he muttered, "not good—it bring—'alone-ness.'" He shook his head, went on: "But I say it poorly—my speech is not —."

"No, no, Paulet, I understand you. I know well that 'alone-ness'." Her eyes filled, she was ready to weep—for Paulet—for herself?

"You have no wife, Paulet?" she whispered.

His face became expressionless and remote before her.

"I *had* a wife," he answered, very low.

Agnes sensed that he had met with some tragic experience with a woman which had profoundly affected him.

"I am sorry," she faltered. There was a peculiar and indescribable charm in this man—in his long preserved silences.

"My father, too, is lost to me—he sought fortune in the North—the far North—he never returned. His mother, his brothers, of noble family in France, they wrote, they hired searchers—all useless!"

Agnes emptied the remaining bottle content into the glasses. Her cheeks felt inflamed.

"Drink!" she admonished him, pushing his glass closer, and then raised again her own. She drank from it and brought the tumbler down to the table with a thump, half full.

"Wha-at name had you-ah lo-ost fawth-ah? she was quivering for some unknown reason and her eyes were fixed glassily upon him.

"Claude de Berriott," he answered, returning her gaze.

"De Berriott?—de Berriott?" It rang a bell in her mind, but she found she couldn't think why. She tried to think—but *couldn't think*—she felt odd—sleepiness came over her—and all the time Paulet's gaze upon her was becoming more intense—more compelling—fascinating her —.

Suddenly her head dropped down—she buried her burning face within her outspread arms upon the table.

Near him, in a graceful arc, lay a bare rounded arm, fair as that of a woman he had known and loved. Paulet reached—his lithe brown fingers enclosed upon it.

* * * * *

Coming homeward on the trail that now was a double scoring of light grey lines upon the velvety black prairie, was a team of horses, harnessed and mounted by two riders, Jim Hudson and Alec LeGrand.

The harness, broken here and there, was bunched, tied in clumps to the horses' sides, which dangled about and impeded rate of travel faster than a walk.

Jim Hudson was talking easily, while his neighbour, LeGrand, rode in tight-lipped silence and eyes smouldering with inward anger.

A series of spirited events had brought LeGrand, a reputed equestrian, to the ignominy of riding from town in this fashion. That morning he had been about to move a loaded wagon of inside furnishings and books belonging to the Dominion Land Office^a in Edmonton over to the south side town of Strathcona, when a mob had laid hold of him, unhitched his team, kicked them in the belly and chased them away, while he was pinned down, powerless to move.

Alec writhed in hot indignation—in the memory of it. Laying hands on *him—abusing his horses!* Had it not been for Timber Tom, now the land agent, whose belongings were upon the wagon—he might not have agreed to have done that extra job of “teaming.” But Tom was his esteemed old neighbour and friend of the Hermitage—he could not in good grace have refused his request. Tom had told him of the dissatisfaction in the old fort town over the order sent from Ottawa, to have the Land Office removed to the town on the south

side of the river, the terminal to be, of the newly-built branch railway line from Calgary. It had never occurred to Alec that the citizens would go so far as to use forcible restraint against the removal of the office.

Now he seethed in fury as he recalled his helplessness when attacked by over fifty men. He had felt like killing some of them upon his release. Timber Tom's voice had come close in his ear. "Steady on, LeGrand, don't let these land greedy lunatics drive you to murder." Tom had recovered the team himself and somehow Jim Hudson was there, too, and he was hustled away. For the first time, Alec regretted having left the Mounted Police Force. "M'mm, just to have had a good revolver once more at my hip——!"

What the devil did it matter anyway, where that blooming shack, the *Land Office*, was standing? Then he realized with a pang of regret that he should have taken the matter of land and legal rights on land more seriously than he had, fifteen years ago. Now their hundred and sixty acres of land was totally inadequate for ranching needs with farmer settlers crowding close upon them. At thirty-eight Alec was seeing some of the mistakes of his younger days. He wished he could start over again. He would have to find some other work when the railway branch was completed and the stage coach trips south no longer necessary.

Jim Hudson, who had obviously been making conversation to calm his companion's ruffled feelings, changed his tone of a sudden and pointed beyond, towards his hay. His face was alight. "Whee-ee, I'll be darned—it's—it's—*all there*, safe as a church." He noted wide furrowed guards about the stacks. "I was sure worried with the wind an' all, but everything's all right—just fine! Now your place faces right on the ravine, Alec. I should think it'd be safe enough."

Then they came up the hill rise to the Hudsons' farm yard, and the smoking ruins of LeGrand's hay came to view. Alec whistled and his eyes quickly ran over the distance towards

his own home and the blackened pasture before. Where were the horses? And Agnes? His eyes stayed on the horizon ahead.

On the Hudson yard Jim dismounted. "Well, s'long, Jim, and thanks for—for—everything," Alec roused himself to say and then hurried the horses on after his neighbour's quick jump to the ground. Alec took the short cut across Hudson's plowed land, while his anger was slowly abating in thinking of the dangers that might have threatened Agnes, alone on the ranch.

Leaving the plowed strip and coming on to burnt-over grass once more, a horse's hoof struck against a tiny dark smouldering mass with a stiff, lizard-like, backward curling tail—all that was left of Patty, the kitten. It was not noticed by the man guiding the horses, nor was he to know that had it not been for the heroism of his wife that morning, another small creature might have perished there.

Alec's attention was diverted instead upon several of the pasture fence posts, that were still afire at the base. He rode to them, dismounted and beat out the flames, thrashing them with his coat.

Coming upon the yard he saw how perilously near the fire had come to the stables and the house. Inside the stable he noticed Bluebell with her head hanging low, oats before her untouched. Her breathing was awful. A terrific welt ran across her right flank. Something was wrong. Why wasn't Agnes out to meet him? His fingers fumbled in haste to tie the team. He all but ran to gain the house and Agnes. Hurrying across the yard he heard the dull thud of a body falling in the barn. Was it—Bluebell ——? Alec sped on faster still to reach the house door.

* * * * *

Agnes became conscious that someone was shaking her violently and without mercy. Strong hands gripped her shoulders, upheld her and shook her limp form into sensibility.

Her hair was tossed about—it swung before her eyes, but reviving senses caught a voice that boomed above. *Alec!* Alec speaking in the harsh choked tones of fury. “Stop, Alec—oh, Alec, stop!” she cried out pitifully.

Then for the second time that day a dash of cold water was thrown across her face. Gulping and gasping for breath, Agnes swayed uncertainly forward—and was caught into a hard embrace. Held fast upon her husband's breast, she could feel his throbbing heart beating strongly against her. And what, asked a stupefied consciousness, was the meaning of all this vehemence—what was Alec *saying?*

“—My fault—it's *my* fault, I know—I *know* it! Leaving you alone—I can't blame you for *anything*—I shouldn't have left you alone with that damned skulking, blasted breed around!”

Contrition vanished from his voice as it went on relentlessly reviling Paulet again in rising tones of anger. *Could this be Alec*, who scarcely ever spoke in this way of *anyone*—let alone a man he well esteemed? What had come over him, cursing poor tragic Paulet, who was noble and fine? Agnes' befogged mind gradually cleared—her returning senses told her that her husband's bitter invective was that of a man irate with jealousy. Alec—*jealous!* Listening, she exulted secretly, and wondered too. Vaguely she remembered Paulet being seated across from her in the chair that was now empty. His half-filled glass still stood upon the table. They were both lonely, they had somehow become attuned to each other, she recalled feeling a quickened responsiveness towards that strange and attractive man who faced her. Now her husband's bony chin was clamped upon her head, it pressed down hard with each passionate utterance: “I'm through—*through* with this life of ours—you here and me in town, and all the damned people there scrambling for *lots—business—money!* Well, I'll *make money too*, and then we'll go to some other place—a new place with more land—we'll start all over again —.”

"——Start over again," breathed Agnes in the hollow of his throat.

"—— And we'll work *together*."

"—— Work together," echoed her voice.

"We won't need anyone else—be by ourselves ——."

"Be by ourselves," whispered Agnes, repeating once more and closing her eyes in a kind of deep passionate contentment.

Alec heard her—felt her resistless body tremblingly weak upon his own. This was a new Agnes for him—altogether passive and touchingly helpless. Compassion tore his heart. He forgave finding her in another man's protecting arms, and strained her closer, ran his fingers through her tumbled hair, smoothed and kissed it. Suddenly he felt for this woman, now close against his heart, an ardour greater than he had ever known before.

* * * * *

In the afternoon the wind abated. By this time the fire had travelled many miles of prairie beyond the LeGrand ranch. It encircled the Weldon farm, too, which lay beyond, and ran its terrifying way right across the country where the Ukrainian settlers had their long low houses of powder blue. Here and there its fury was checked by a fighting homesteader with fire guards encircling houses and hay. Then the sky became overcast and a spit of rain fell. There followed a light drizzle. The last of the fire was trapped upon a triangular plateau caused by a sharp bend in the river. Here it burned feebly and sputtered as it reached the edge of the cutbank. After smoking long and sulkily on the dampened ground it went out. The prairie fire was no more. Some more rain fell then, which made the vast panorama of blackened prairie a still deeper black. As far as the eye could see the land was covered in this sombre mantle of mourning with just a scattering of neighbouring farmsteads showing here and there in light coloured blocks, like little enframed pictures on a vast wall

of black. On the Weldon farm a small child ran out beyond the surrounding fireguard onto the burnt prairie.

"Pauline—Paul—eene —," called her mother from the kitchen. The rain had stopped—it had freshened the air—the sky was clearing. "— you'll get yourself all sooty and black—come back—come *right* back here!"

Grace Weldon was busy with her youngest baby. There was impatience in her voice. But her little girl tarried. Pauline, now a chubby youngster of five, was seemingly unmindful of her mother's call. She was looking for something—bending over and searching the ground. There it was! She found it: a large cluster of crocuses that she had seen that morning—lovely soft blue-petalled flowers centred upon lush fronds of grey-green. Now these were a charred mass of shrivelled, twisted, string-like stems. The little girl gazed down at them awesomely, and sorrow was on her childish face. She raked the brittle remains gingerly with the toe of her shoe.

On the trail nearby, a lone man came walking. Some whimsey drew him from the road to see what the child was observing upon the grass.

"My flowers," little Pauline pointed, "all—burned—dead." She was near tears.

"But no, my little one," the man smiled, and his darkly intent features became enchantingly sweet, "look!" He bent down and thrust his fingers deep into the very heart of the seared plant. And true enough, where he had parted the blackened mound, one could see two tiny fuzzy buds, side by side, sturdy and alive. He unfurled one tightly-curved petal with a finger-tip. Inside, the bloom was purplish dark, freshly fragrant.

"Oo—oh," breathed the girl in surprised delight. She knelt down and bent low to press her soft cheek upon their furry heads. Her eyes danced gleefully up at the tall man standing there.

"*We*," the little crocus buds whispered, "*are new young life, hopeful, promising—we go on and on, forever—we never die!*"

Suddenly remembering her mother's call, the child rose and scampered joyfully away. The man, too, went upon his way; to the trail which led east—east by south. He had a long journey on the open trail that stretched before. But the man felt undaunted and free—he sang as he walked on in an easy swinging stride, singing a strange melody the while that was poignantly sweet and wild. His song rang out clear, high and wordless like that of a savage. The man was happy—strangely elated. This day he had found sympathy in a fine woman of rare understanding, whilst just now a child had smiled up at him with the same laughing eyes and ripe lips of Leetah Prudham, the woman he loved. He was going far to the east now, but there would come a day when he would return, go back to the North and see her again.



Chapter Fourteen

Some "Klondykers"

"THIS will do very nicely, Mrs. Mjolsness, I'm sure," said the lady school teacher, appraising the room. "Why, of course, I like it better here than at the hotel! I just hate walking through that front entrance filled with all those men—drunken miners—and their ogling—here it's private."

The bland countenance of Mrs. Mjolsness lit with pleasure, she was going to get another eighteen dollars a month for

room and board, even without the plaster! Nels had built their new house, but had hired out to build so many others that his own was not readied for plastering until the season was too late—freezing. It was the beginning of December.

So poor Mrs. Mjolsness had to move in the unfinished house with all its walls of lath. It had been cruelly disappointing, for all summer she had borne life in a tent near the immigration hall, hopefully dreaming of the day she would move to her fine big house with its four upstairs rooms (two connected with double doors) and nice smooth floors.

Miss McArthur, Miss *Beatrice Rhoda* McArthur, saw that big white bed sheets were hung across the lath partitions; saw the cleanliness; the squares of hardanger worked in the counterpane on the high bed.

"Yes, I know I'm going to like it here, and I don't mind the partitions and doors of sheeting in the least, Mrs. Mjolsness—it's—it's like living in a Moorish house, isn't it?" she finished brightly.

The teacher did not divulge another reason why the place was so satisfactory for her to stay; there were no school age children in this family, the three little Mjolsness's all being under six years of age. It made the place preferable to a more elegant room offered at the Hudsons, newly moved in town from the farm, where were Betty and Ben, her pupils, both at the impertinent early 'teen' age. It was only too apparent the mother was spoiling that girl, the youngest—and pretty. The Mjolsness room was engaged immediately.

Beatrice McArthur was always called 'Birdie' back home in Dundas. She was a bright eyed little creature with a pixie-like face. She had 'taught' for some years and was already nearing thirty, though one could scarcely tell her age. She appeared ageless, with her small body and funny short hair. The short hair was because she had had typhoid in the past year. The shorn mass of brown ringlets that clung to her head was considered a real affliction for any lady to bear in that day—it was like a man's hair, 'masculine' looking.

Though dear knows, Miss Birdie didn't seem to care—she even wore clothing that looked 'masculine' too. There was that tweed thing she wore so much, for instance, that heavy, wool, durable costume. It had been painstakingly tailored by four older sisters (all spinsters) before she left home. And many a quiet tear had been shed upon it for 'poor Birdie going to that wild Indian country,' as they basted, sewed and pressed its many box-pleats in place.

In fact the garment well nigh stood alone by reason of its hefty double thickness throughout. The material was from that old ulster 'Uncle Robbie' had left them. He had been a wool grower in Scotland, and quite a 'toff' in his day. With a girth and weight over three times that of his niece 'Birdie,' the cloak offered ample material for the 'make-over'."

When the sisters fitted the finished costume with its over jacket upon their younger sister, she was like something encased—all outlines of a slim figure lost. Birdie was just somewhere inside that dress.

The sisters had been pleased—the garment was obviously just the thing to withstand the rigours of the climate and life 'out West.'

So, well fortified by her protecting tweed and topped with a sailor hat that expressed all of the wearer's proficient neatness, Birdie stepped from the branch-line¹ train at its Edmonton terminus one sweltering fall day.

The experience of the last nine days in travel had left her in a state of mind that was nothing short of grim.

The last lap from Calgary had been the worst. There had been delay in starting due to waiting for a freight train from the east. The coach was packed with people, many who were crowding into Edmonton to be outfitted for the Klondyke.² Some who had been on her train from Toronto had abandoned their course on to Vancouver to take the short cut route via Edmonton. They were a gay, boisterous lot. On starting, windows were opened wide because of the heat. The coach

became stifling with dust and engine smoke and then there was *that woman!*

A woman who walked brazenly up and down the aisle, letting the jolting train fling her ample figure carelessly against seats or aiding outstretched hands; whose broad cheeks were painted a purplish pink from eyes to chin where the colouring stopped abruptly upon a natural Indian red.

Beneath a lavish pink silk dress, black lace stockings showed above the high heeled shoe tops.

Twice, while the creature swished by, Birdie had noticed a flower bedecked garter hanging around the lace stockinged ankle. It brought forth hoots and whistles. Birdie was certain then that *that* was why it was there. Birdie McArthur hadn't known anything so revolting in all her life before. It positively sickened her.

Arriving on the platform of the 'Strathcona' station she was urged forward by passengers from behind and pushed backward by eager oncoming persons. A number of the latter called out, "Hullo Rosetta—oh, Roseet-ta!" to the loud dressed woman who was behind her.

The woman was no other than Rosetta Generoux, risen from the Mill Creek settlement.

Everyone was lifting luggage and climbing into busses or other horse-drawn vehicles, which were lined along the platform.

Birdie's ticket included transportation to Edmonton, which town she knew was across the river and two miles away.

She was a little uncertain what to do. She was suspicious of a red-nosed man calling: "Temperance—strictly temperance—Hotel, lady." Sometimes a "temperance" hotel was definitely *not* a temperance hotel, sister Maggie had warned.

Then she saw the public bus, "Edmonton Bus," already filled and Rosetta climbing in. *Birdie was not going to get in that bus with that woman!* She clutched her purse, bag and umbrella, tightened her mouth and looked around a little anxiously. People were going fast—busses leaving too. A

three-storey frame building, which was an hotel, stood not far away on the opposite corner of the wide street, though that street, she saw to her dismay, was a quagmire of deep black mud. Evidently there had been a recent heavy rainfall. Her last chance to ride had gone with a shake of her head at the handsome driver seated in front of that "Edmonton Bus" which was now proceeding towards the hotel. The spirited horses were straining through the mire.

What now? She couldn't stand on that station platform forever! She felt the afternoon sun burning hot upon her, right through the tweed. Grasping up her bag, Birdie pluckily struck out to cross that mud. It was even worse than she had thought. She tried to step around the water holes—circumvent them somehow, which took her somewhat off course from the hotel. She sensed being under observation, heard tittering from someone in that bus ahead. Her feet became heavily caked. Thick skirts dragged because her laden hands could not lift them. Birdie gritted her teeth and plunged on another step towards her goal.

If Rosetta had felt the new teacher's frozen exterior in the coach, she now had her revenge—for they were all looking at the little lady crossing the street—and some laughing. "Oh, lookit," Rosetta gurgled, "that old maid *broomstick!*"

The bus gave a sudden jolt then, for the driver had held up his team smartly to turn them. Being a gentleman, he was driving back to rescue that lady who was fast getting bogged down.

In three lunging leaps the horses had reached Miss Birdie's side and their agile driver had sprung to the ground.

He still held the lines in one hand—"Whoa—Win! Steady, Baron!" They became quiet. Only Alec LeGrand could do that with horses. For Alec LeGrand still served Edmonton as the bus driver. Alec's free arm pulled Birdie, bag and all, from the mud.

"Yes, ma'm—we'll take you—going right over to the old town now lady. Just put your arm around my neck, ma'm—

there now!" He hoisted the little teacher up into the open seated bus as though she were a rag doll.

In the bus a slight modest fellow rose, took the bag from the driver, and stood holding it, as Birdie was plopped down in his seat. The man's face held the same look of whimsical humour he habitually assumed to cover a perplexed embarrassment. Upon seeing poor Birdie's set white face, this man, who was Tom Grant, turned away without speaking. Birdie was grateful for that back turned upon her which afforded an effective screen for a vexed humiliation.

Alec jumped up to his driver's seat: "giddyap!" A small boy seated next him repeated the command a tone higher. The strong rig lurched forward on its way down the muddy road towards the river.

The little dark haired boy was now often seen beside Alec when driving the big bus to the station. He was the driver's only son, born to the LeGrands some five years ago, to the great wonder of all who knew them. He was a striking little fellow, with his father's dark curls crowning a proudly modelled face. The LeGrands now lived a secluded family life near town in a rustic house that nestled upon the river bank. For, upon the death of Bluebell, the ranch had been sold. People on the bus often heard their driver tell of the big ranch he was going to go to up in the North country, after the bridge was built and a railroad brought right into Edmonton.

The bus came to the top of the incline to the river. Birdie looked down that steep road to the waiting ferry below. It was a little frightening. She touched Tom's shoulder and begged the man with her bag to sit on her "outside" seat. "Then I'll—I'll hang onto you," she said. They had all been pitched about so thoroughly by this time that there was no more standing on dignity.

Tom Grant acquiesced with just a glimmer of repressed amusement and a nod. The bus began the precipitous descent

and leaned perilously to their side—the 'old maid broomstick' in her tweeds, clung fast to Tom.

When they were come upon the ferry, their smooth gliding passage across the water brought back equanimity. Nearly everyone descended from horse drawn vehicles to stand by the ferry's guard rail.

Birdie glanced sidewise at the man who had aided her so gallantly in the downhill ride. He didn't offer conversation nor show an inclination to do so. Nor was he a young 'freshie' either. There were wrinkles across his high forehead, 'crows-feet' at the sides of thoughtfully observing eyes. He didn't even look at her. Well that was all right. Birdie saw the cement piers rising from wooden curbing down stream.

"Is that where the bridge^a is to be?" she inquired.

Tom nodded and said a respectful "Yes", in that unusual voice of his. Then he moved further from her down the rail.

Of course, she had asked one of those silly questions; she realized that, but goodness, wasn't that fellow woman shy?

On the opposite railside were a knot of people, where chattering voices buzzed merrily. Rosetta with two other young women of her own kind had voice among these.

When they neared the north bank the bus driver who had been holding the heads of his nettlesome team, called her:

"There's better room in front for you, lady."

So Birdie McArthur rode up the steep mud-rutted hillroad from the river, sitting next to Alec and the boy. She noted the graceful strength of the man's tall lank figure—the squared shoulders, the handsome profile—no woman could sit beside Alec without noticing that. She admired too, his easy control of the team as they pulled their swaying load upwards.

This time, she decided, she wasn't going to ask questions or say anything at all.

The road seemed to get more and more steep—she saw the horses' flanks straining—hooves going deep in mud.

Once Alec put on brakes and stopped them altogether.

"O-oh! Why s-stop?" came involuntarily from Birdie. She had seen the abyss that fell sheer to the river at her side. There were little squeals of terror from some of those women behind her.

All the while, Alec had been humming and singing casually in a pleasant bass voice—he always did this, driving, ever since he took over the bus contract some years ago. The humming stopped and he drawled:

"Well, now—it's like this, m'am; hawses knows a lot—'n' they know there's a nice looking lady back here—a stranger in these parts. So all along they've been honin' to stop 'n' take a good look around."

And in truth, the two horses had turned around, heads in opposite ways, to eye her in a long steady gaze.

For a brief second, he was almost believed. She looked up, caught the devilish gleam in a lazy glance from under dark lashed eyes.

"Win! Baron! turn around!" reproved the boy, frowning hard at the team.

Birdie laughed outright. It was her first real laugh since coming west. The mud was drying on her boots and skirts. She scraped, flicked some away, and felt better.

With creaking wheel-brakes released, they were dragged to the top. On the main thoroughfare there were big brick buildings like the ones at home in Dundas. The prim little teacher walked the board sidewalk to an hotel that was in opposite direction to one which Rosetta entered.

* * * * *

Mrs. Mjolsness felt a mite guilty that day, for not telling the teacher about another boarder she had in the room next hers. He was such a quiet, nice man though, and was always away before the teacher had her breakfast, so why should it matter to her? Miss McArthur, as a matter of fact, didn't know

nor care who was living near her these days, she was so engrossed in her teaching duties. At nights she corrected her pupils' work until late with the Mjolsness' 'big nickel' lamp (that belonged in their best room downstairs) burning a high flame at her left.

Late hours with the big lamp burning away kerosene, was Miss McArthur's only drawback as a boarder. To offset this expense, Mrs. Mjolsness charged extra for doing her boarder's laundry. Miss McArthur was pleased with the laundering arrangement and gladly paid her landlady for having it so well done.

So, Mrs. Mjolsness never complained about the kerosene and worked hard with the bigger washings and the cooking for her table that winter. She told herself that by making it 'nice' for the teacher, she was helping education; which was just what she was doing.

On the first Saturday when Birdie was home and she and her landlady had been getting better acquainted; Mrs. Mjolsness, while cleaning the upstairs, opened wide all the doorway sheeting and showed the teacher her upstairs rooms.

"How big, roomy and nice" exclaimed Birdie on seeing each room.

Mrs. Mjolsness in a burst of enthusiastic pride decided she must show the teacher those double doors connecting the two rooms. The sheets covering the lathed partition concealed this special feature from view in Birdie's own room. So she was obliged to usher the teacher in her other boarder's room.

Birdie admired this room, too, which was to be, as Mrs. Mjolsness put it, a 'zitting-dressing room'. Mrs. Mjolsness noticed her audience had become inattentive and was staring with marked interest at a row of books upon the table. These were the only books Birdie had so far come across in the house with the exception of the Bible downstairs. Their titles astonished her. "Aristotle's 'Organon', Plato's 'Republic', Writings of Voltaire, Kant, Schopenhauer, *Schopenhauer!*"

"Mrs. Mjolsness, are these yours?"

"Na-nal" Mrs. Mjolsness now hastened to explain that these were the property of the man who stayed there. He was, she said, very nice and very quiet. Surely Miss Birdie had found this so?

Yes, the teacher was ready to agree—all the sounds that had so far disturbed her nocturnal labours had come from the direction of the Mjolsness' room to the left—with the loud snorings of Nels.

Mrs. Mjolsness now felt better. She had made the confession—and the lady was already favorably impressed with the man's character from his books.

"What is his name—what sort of a person is he?"

"Oh, choost an 'ordinaire' man—name Tom—Tom Grant." She was visibly uneasy.

"Well, if he reads these books"—Birdie was fingering a Shakespeare play in soft leather binding—"he's not quite an 'ordinary' man, Mrs. Mjolsness." And this was stated by the little Ontario teacher in the authoritative tone of one who knows.

* * * * *

It was nearly midnight before the lady teacher had at last finished writing the 'report' cards. She could hear the slow deep breathing of the sleeping occupants in the adjacent rooms.

She rose and tiptoed to her stove—not a real stove, just a big sheet iron swelling on the piping that ran up from the heater downstairs. She put a questioning finger into her bath water that was heating in a vessel placed on top. It was piping hot—clean, soft, snow water, and enough to wash her hair, too. With noiseless, careful movements Birdie prepared her bath. She brought the china bowl and pitcher, towels, soap and sponge nearer to the heat.

One towel was spread on the floor next to the bowl. On her chair placed nearby, were laid the soap, sponge and other towel. One by one, she began to undo the hook and eye fastenings of

her heavy woollen dress, beginning at the top of her collar. The dress was then neatly hung on pegs, also the voluminous top petticoat. Next came the shorter one and then an under petticoat of cream flannel with hem daintily feather-stitched in pink.

The while Birdie's fingers mechanically sought openings of garments, undoing hook or button, she mused upon her report findings: "Everyone of those half-breeds got their poetry all memorized! They like the poems. But they certainly fall down in arithmetic. That little Williams' boy is a smart one—restless as a rabbit—and that new Weldon girl can sing like a lark—wish I knew what to do about her—she can't be spending all her recess time weeping in the cloak room. A real problem—."

Ribbon was being drawn from entredeux trimming of the cambric underwaist and drawers to prepare the garments for the laundry. The teacher's ruminating thoughts went on: "—Her mother isn't going to be a help—I could tell right off—no use telling her. She only thinks and talks about her house and the housework, her hard work. Well, perhaps she *isn't* strong enough—I wish I could transmit some of Mrs. Hudson's extra maternal devotion to this Weldon mother for Pauline. The girl's going to be a beauty some day—but it's true she has an Indian quality about her with her dark hair and luscious red lips. Youngsters are heartless with each other."

Shoes were unbuttoned, placed neatly together at the foot of the bed. Her corset was an odd affair. Of heavy coutil and wide whale boning, it ran from hips to well above the bust line, where wide straps ran over the shoulders. It had no lacings and was buttoned down the front. Actually this was of the type commonly worn by girls of adolescent age.

Birdie, having never developed the 'womanly' form, had from choice continued wearing this kind.

The inflexible, straight-shaped garment removed, Birdie's slight, delicately rounded form stood clad only in a knee-length chemise.

The bowl at her feet was filled with water poured as soundless as possible from vessel and pitcher. Accidentally the pitcher was struck against the bowl in lifting it away.

A ringing clangour arose.

Birdie stopped, listened. The breathing of the sleepers remained constant and steady.

Then the last vestige of clothing was hastily whisked off and one foot immersed in the bowl. The bathing began.

Lying awake in the next room, Tom marvelled at the soundless ablutions of his neighbour. He had been awakened at the very beginning of those mouse-like trippings over the floor and the moving shadows on the sheet that followed them. If the landlady only knew, it was her gentleman boarder whom she was likely to lose!

A spitting sizzle on the lamp chimney warned the bather of the danger of a break. At once she took the lamp from the table, carried it to the bureau stand, farther away. With the lamp in this position and reflecting mirror behind, Birdie in her bath was in Tom's direct line of vision through the sheet-covered double door aperture. Tip-toeing back to the bowl in the centre of the room, her figure was sharply silhouetted in dark against the yellow lamp-glow on the sheet. In nearing, the shadow-graph seemed to approach right to him, enlarging to slightly over life-size.

The form was surprisingly rounded, femininely curvaceous, and in its animated movement, quite bewitching.

Tom watched it bend, rise and poise with weaving arms like a dancing fairy. He thought of Titania—the queen, dainty and captivating.

All the while he feigned the deep slow breathing of one enjoying soundest sleep. This, he knew, he must do to hold that sprite from vanishing. After a while, the bowl was raised to the chair and the head bent to it—down, up; down, up; down, up; like a saucy robin drinking. Then motions grew wilder and wilder as the loose hair was tossed and shaken and

thrown about. She was like an Apache dancer now—in complete abandon—flinging her drape about, weaving it, waving it, then beckoning—beckoning—beckoning—.

It seemed he had just closed his eyes when he awoke to find all in complete darkness; the dancing shadow gone. Had he dreamt it? Incredible that that alluring creature be the very real person of Miss Birdie McArthur, the teacher. The “old maid broomstick”, they called her. Others would continue to think of her as such, but Tom Grant never thought of her that way again—*never*.

* * * * *

Quite by chance Birdie met her ‘woman shy’ man of the bus again.

It was when the days were drawing near to Christmas and the school was preparing its usual Christmas entertainment program.

She had been making some special arrangements regarding it with some of the girls of her class during the afternoon recess, when she suddenly realized that she had overrun the fifteen minute play period.

She at once sounded her bell and the girls went to their desks. Some of the boys returned from outside. She noticed that several seats remained empty. Ben Hudson and several of his followers were missing. This was serious. It wasn’t merely playing ‘hookey’, it was mob insubordination. Already the rumour had come to her ears that she wasn’t considered ‘strong enough’ to handle the bigger boys of her class, like Ben Hudson and Billy Karst. *She wasn’t going to enlist the aid of the principal upstairs*—it would be too much of an admission.

Birdie, bell in hand, flew outside. She was just in time to see the last boy disappearing through a break in the fence that opened upon a way towards town. The boys of the school were restive and difficult these days because of the activities of thousands of new people⁴, the “Klondykers”, in town.

Birdie had heard that actual broncho-busting sometimes went on in the main street, Jasper Avenue. A terrific engine contraption was being built by some, which drew them, too.

Well, spunky little Birdie would show 'em they couldn't take her school children away!

Coming to the fence opening she saw them going off—Ben leading. She called after them shrilly: "Ben—Ben Hudson! You come right back here!" and she rang the bell hard. They paid no heed.

At this time Tom Grant happened upon the way from town—this path beside the schoolhouse⁵ was a favourite short cut of his from newspaper office to the new land office⁶, a handsome brick building which lay to the west. He saw the situation at once; the swaggering boys before and the little teacher following, calling desperately. His ringing voice called a command: "Go back, you young hellions! Your teacher wants you!"

He blocked their way. The boys stopped, hesitated—saw the look on 'Timber Tom's' hard bitten face, the threatening forward thrust of his body. Ben, looking sheepish, turned around, marched back towards school. The others followed.

Birdie was so grateful. The man had saved the day for her.

This time she would say her thanks directly without preliminary remarks:

"Thank you, ever so much, Mister—ah—Mister—?"

"Grant, ma'm," said Tom respectfully, touching his hat to his lady of the shadow.

"Grant?—Tom Grant?"

Birdie's bright brown eyes shone with new interest. She beamed upon the slight man now walking at her side, "Well, Mr. Grant, I'm *once more* indebted to you for your assistance."

Then she hurried on, darted through the opening in the school fence behind the truant boys, resuming the firm lips of severity befitting a school teacher.



During the school holidays Birdie told her landlady that it wasn't necessary that she have her meals in solitary state at another time than the family. She knew this would make less work for Mrs. Mjolsness, too. After that, the evening meal saw Birdie seated beside Tom Grant; facing the Mjolsnesses across the big table in the kitchen. With the three young children variously dispersed about the table, they were seven in all.

Chatter and demands for food from the children quickly dispelled all feeling of formality at mealtimes. Birdie found it a bit noisy, but altogether jolly. At Christmas time she wasn't homesick as she had thought she would be. She found the Swedish dish at Yuletide tasty and their customs novel.

And Mr. Tom Grant, his shyness gone, proved an interesting person in conversation, having a certain pawkish wit common to his Orkney ancestors.

They became well acquainted—talked about everything—the amusing gossip about the newcomers in town—about Lord Avonmore⁷ and his English colleagues outfitting for the Yukon, the collapse of the great 'I Will' machine, and other more serious subjects, such as the intemperance that prevailed in town.

The suppertime talks led to longer discussion, and even arguments, upon occasion. Their topics varied upon matters of economic reform, socialism and the question of proper justice in the according of capital punishment to Louis Riel.

The Mjolsnesses, younger both in years and thought than bachelor and maid, added their own word to the debate, usually a meaty bit of logic gleaned from life experience totally different from that of Birdie and Tom.

It was good fun. Birdie gladly picked up a tea towel to help with the dishes when the debate prolonged, which more often found Mrs. Mjolsness aligned in staunch support of her lady boarder.

Once, on such an occasion, Nels became silent and Tom said in a voice of amused tolerance: "*You women*, you argue with your emotions."

At which Birdie countered hotly: "And you *men* think everything is reason and—and 'Schopenhauer'." Her eyes met Tom's challengingly.

It was a new and refreshing experience to Tom, this life he now had—so filled with mellow content; living in the familiar atmosphere of home with *women*. For, motherless at an early age, he had only known a woman's presence in the home for a few years; during which time Milly Newbridge had, as preceptress of the Hermitage, maintained that respectful formality towards him, becoming a woman of important professional responsibilities.

Until her recent death, Nurse Newbridge had written him every year at Christmas. It was from her letters Tom learned of Daniel's 'delay' in returning to his diocese in Edmonton. During that first summer of Canon Newbridge's return to England he had been invited to supply in the pulpit of a minister taking a vacation. Daniel, in the fine zeal and enthusiasm of his recent missionary experience, had there given utterance to much that was unorthodox and startling to the parishioners of an old established, wealthy diocese. Whereupon protesting letters were sent to the *London Times*. With his reply the church had become thronged. More and more letters were sent to the *Times* and Daniel was forced to larger churches in making a necessary response. The more fearlessly he had answered, the greater had become the number of letters sent to the *London Times*, and the larger had become his church attendances. And thus Daniel was caught in this vicious circle of his own creating, from which he was unable to extricate himself.

It became necessary to have a police cordon wherever he made a public speech.

Milly Newbridge wrote that Tomison must surely see what a tremendous field of work was open to her brother in England—far too great to be lightly abandoned.

Tom had known when Nurse Newbridge's health necessitated her return home the year following the rebellion, that

Daniel no longer felt obligated to come back to Edmonton—his last letter had intimated that. The western diocese called for a younger man than himself, he wrote. It was just a little hard to realize that Dan was no longer young—that he was over fifty! And he, himself, nearly forty!

The Hermitage was now occupied by a stock raiser who found the cooling ravine nearby excellent for his cattle. The front garden was overgrown with weeds. Only the lilacs still flourished that were cut from plants his father once cultivated in a garden in England. Tom didn't go to the Hermitage any more, it made him feel so sad.

* * * * *

"I am glad you asked me to dance, Tom, I was afraid you wouldn't; that you'd be too shy."

They were having an "Old Timers"⁸ gathering. There was a dinner, followed by speeches—and then a dance.

Tom had made a speech which had been most warmly applauded. It had been an unusual speech—breathing the optimism of his dream of Edmonton's future. He had purposely spoken in this vein to prove to Birdie he wasn't all pessimistic 'Schopenhauer'.

Because of his excellent speaking voice, everyone had heard him easily. Perhaps he had been a little too visionary, saying the real passage to the east was through our west, and that some future day they would all be taking that route in dirigible balloons. There had been a good deal of laughing at that, of course, which Tom had anticipated and wanted.

"I enjoyed your speech more than any of the others, I think it's your voice, Tom, I think it was as pleasant to listen to as Mr. LeGrand's solo.

"Now really, Miss Birdie!"

"Yes, yes—I mean it. Do you know—" she went on in a quick confiding tone, "that yesterday afternoon when you were

talking to Mrs. Mjolsness downstairs in the kitchen, I drew aside my door curtain just to hear you better?"

This last, so flattering, was almost too much for Tom—he blushed dark red with pleasure. He answered almost roughly, to cover a helpless confusion: "You wouldn't like to hear it, though, all day long and throughout the night—snoring—"

"But you don't snore, Tom!"

It was a bad slip, she realized, too late. Birdie's face became red, too.

"Oh, that's right—it's that confounded beggar, Nels, who does!"

He gave her well fortified waist a quick reassuring squeeze in his remorse for having trapped her into a remark that brought obvious discomfiture.

Birdie's eyes, that had been lowered in embarrassment, raised slowly, "Timber Tom Grant," she said in mock severity, "you're not proposing to me, are you?"

"Good Lord! I'm not, am I?"

They both laughed then, and with that their former relationship of easy, frank amiability was once more restored.

When their dance ended Tom saw the local banker, who was cutting quite a figure on the floor, coming towards them to ask Birdie for the next dance.

He left for home then, having no desire to dance more or mingle with others.



The path leading down the steep embankment to Jean's shack was covered with uneven patches of treacherous ice. Tom struck his heels in it savagely at each step—it suited his mood. He had just come from the bank uptown where he had gone to deposit his usual modest savings.

There he had suffered an experience so humiliating that he still smarted from its effect. The manager had called him to

his private office. The last bag of 'dust' he had brought in was afterwards found falsely weighted, the bank man told him, being wet and containing a percentage of quicksilver.⁹ The bag was returned to Tom—its former evaluation having been duly deducted from the balance of his account.

The fact that the manager was big, sleek, well dressed, and handsome had only made the matter more unendurable. Also he had been playing the part of 'Beau Brummel' to all the young ladies in town, including Miss Birdie McArthur.

Tom had taken the parcel from him without a word of explanation or apology: "Yes, I shall attend to the matter"—then he had gone out.

Now he was on his way to Jean Borgereau—the real culprit in the matter—"Blast his dirty hide!" thought Tom, "letting me in for that!"

Jean had been panning gold that fall on the river near his shack. He had worked on Tom's old grizzly too, part time. A partnership of sorts had been worked out between them; Tom purchasing the provisions on which Jean subsisted—acting as vendor of the gold dust and receiving a certain percentage of the returns.

The path now ran between rows of tents, the temporary abode of those on their way to the North—gold seekers. Some were placarded in comic fashion—over there was Matty's tent. Matty's tent still sported the "Klondyke or Bust" sign. He had got as far as St. Albert with what he and two of his pals thought the best and neatest idea of economic transportation yet. Barrels filled full with provisions were the roller wheels of their rig. It had collapsed entirely ten miles out from town. Now he was back—trying to get staked again for a new start—lacking funds—but quite undaunted.

Matty had even asked Tom to lend him money—to grub-stake him:

"Come along and we'll be pardners," Matty had urged.

At the bank Tom's "balance" was exactly two hundred and thirty-four dollars and twelve cents, with the amount of the

falsely weighed dust deducted. Actually he had been tempted to risk it all and go, get away, away from a disappointment he must live down. An unhappiness because of Birdie.

June last, she had gone east to her home and sisters for the summer, fully believing she would return at the fall opening of school. Changes were made in the school staff, however; a man teacher was called to Birdie's position in the town school. She did not return.

Tom, too, had left the Mjolsness house so it could undergo inside plastering and finishing.

When he called there in the fall, Mrs. Mjolsness told him regretfully that she no longer could let her rooms; 'it was too much work' and she was about to have another child. Furthermore, Nels had been doing well, they weren't 'hard up' any longer, she had proudly added.

Tom missed the life he had known at the Mjolsness home more than he cared to admit. And he was powerless to bring it back. You couldn't offer marriage to a fine, intelligent girl like Birdie on the meagre income of an assistant in the office of a small weekly paper and a part time clerk in a land office. Her own earnings would be more than that. A well-bred, educated person like Birdie deserved a big brick house to live in, such as were going up all over town—such as the banker could offer her.

"Timber Tom Grant, you're not proposing to me, are you?" No, he was not. At forty it simply wasn't compatible with one's reason to consider such a thing—not with two hundred and thirty-four dollars and twelve—*"You men think everything is reason and 'Schopenhauer'—."*

But, he told himself, he actually was not 'in love' with Birdie McArthur—he hadn't felt that touch of sublimity in his thoughts of Birdie as passionate lovers know when being 'in love'. Yet he missed her sorely—her quick birdlike movements; her clear responsiveness of mind. It was no use; he hadn't wherewithal even to go to her and bring her back west.

"*Throw in with Matty*" came a voice, "*Take a chance at a strike*". Others had, and had made good. Then he could offer marriage to the woman he wanted.

Tom reached Jean's hovel—the very shack the breed had once imprudently moved upon an unowned uptown lot to stay. It now rested only a little way below where it had fallen that day the 'Vigilantes' had pushed it into their 'depository' more than ten years ago.

Tom kicked on the door, heard Jean's groaning response. A bed creaked and then the door was opened. There stood Jean—his huge shoulders drooping; his heavy black hair tousled over a dissolute, weathered face.

Jean had been drinking again. Tom smelled liquor—and a bottle, with a glass beside, stood on the table. That meant someone else had been drinking with him. Jean never bothered using a tumbler with his liquor in a bottle.

Tom and he sat down in the only two chairs of the shack. On the dirty board floor in front of them lay a woman's pink, flower-decorated garter.

The breed saw Tom's glance go to it and he gave it a swift kick out of the way. It was an eloquent gesture.

"Jean, why don't you marry Rosetta?" The words surprised himself.

"Hah! hunh! Rawzetta? *Marry Rawzeeta?* Naugh! She no mod-aire! I want a woman, a mod-thaire—gentille—tendresse —" his voice trailed off—failed—his eyes stared ahead; pathetically befuddled with bewildered pain.

And instinctively Tom knew of whom he was thinking. Evidently there were scars on Jean's memory, too.

The scathing censorious words Tom had intended to say somehow miscarried. Jean denied everything—he hadn't done it, no—he hadn't dampened the sand, nor left in extra mercury. It was all a mistake, some big mistake! His lying fear persisted like that of an accused child in guilt. It was useless, utterly useless. Only when the subject was changed to

the neighbouring man, Matty, did Tom comprehend the deed done. Jean wanted to go with Matty and for that he must have money—'quick' money. Jean was willing to work hard too—very hard—just for that money!

Wending his way back, Tom hesitated before the Klondyker's tent. It was lighted inside. Shadowy forms moved within—talking and laughing.

Perhaps he again saw that shadow beckoning—and the eyes of a woman filled with understanding love. Twice, before he found his lady of the shadow, he had seen that look of loving understanding in the eyes of women: in the lustrous dark of a laughing Metis girl, and again, in the narrow, strained, thick lensed eyes of a nun.

Was woman to be for him only a tender look, a phantom sprite, an unreal shadow that beckoned, that cajoled, and then receded—leaving him the empty darkness?

Tom Grant thrust aside the opening flap and walked into the tent of 'Matty' the Klondyker.

* * * * *

As winter days lengthened and snow receded, the "Klondykers" tents, clustered all over the town, disappeared, and the town's population, spuriously increased by thousands, returned to normal. Matty's tent was one of the first to go, this time properly equipped by reason of his new found partner's ample grubstake. Matty was mightily pleased with Tom in every way until he found that his pack of belongings was heavy with books.

"Suffering snakes" cried Matty, "pitch 'em out 'n the river, man!" But when he met Tom's stubborn refusal he discreetly held his peace and the pack was loaded intact upon the supply wagon. The fellow was a dogged son of a gun, Matty reasoned, which was good. Jean Borgereau helped the loading. He was

to come along. Matty saw Jean's huge strength as a help in making the back-breaking portages in their trek. On the back of the wagon was nailed the sign, "Klondyke or Bust".

* * * * *

Not one of the party ever reached the "City of Gold". Only a very few of those who struck out from that multitude of tents in Edmonton, did. The gargantuan "I will"¹⁰ machine remained in the hole its driving wheels had made on the attempted start as a mute symbol of the broken hopes of the Klondyke gold seekers. Matty's fate, like many another "musher" will never be told. After Fort Nelson he and Tom were not heard from again. Jean Borgereau had abandoned the party even before they had reached that far. He found it comparatively easy to join the many returning parties. Those who had given up hope of ever reaching Dawson City welcomed others taking the trail back. The breed eventually found his way back to Edmonton by the roundabout way of Vancouver; thankful, like many another, that he had survived.

Some of the townspeople inquired about Matty and Grant. Had they struck luck? But neither Jean nor anyone else had heard further about them. And then the vanished Klondykers were forgotten. Tom, being a bachelor, without relatives, was forgotten sooner than most. Though there came a day when someone *did* make specific inquiry about Tom. This was on a June day of the following year and came from the wife of banker MacConnell. For the young bank manager, the town's most popular bachelor, had brought with him on the return from a business trip east, a charming and vivacious bride. This little lady's complete indifference to him on a former acquaintance had so piqued, intrigued and entirely baffled the man that he needs must win her hand in marriage.

Thus Birdie McArthur, the school teacher, came back to the west, travelling this time in the elegant privacy of a drawing

room, and wearing a stylish suit of dove grey broadcloth, while her tiny beflowered hat, dipped down over one eye, was so far from being utilitarian as to look downright frivolous. Nearing their destination, Birdie looked eagerly out of the window as the train was crossing the bridge. Two years had brought many changes. She saw the ferry moored below and the awful hill road she had driven upon that memorable day she first came to town. And then, of course, she thought of Tom.

"Yes, yes, I know whom you mean," was the answer to her query, "—that quiet chap at the land office. He withdrew every cent of his savings and staked it on going to the Yukon. The poor sucker hasn't been heard from since."

Birdie resented this allusion to Tom as a "sucker." Tom Grant was anything but a *sucker*. But with true wifely tact she forebore speaking any more of him. She told herself she had the best husband in the world—good looking, always with nice clean hands and neat about his clothes—she glanced down at the well defined creasings on the trousers, his impeccable patent leather boots—and he had come a-courting when she had thought it unlikely that she would ever marry. Fred MacConnell was ambitious, too, no dreamer. After all, one couldn't think of Tom in terms of a *husband*, could one? Hadn't he, himself, said as much to that effect?

So Birdie talked brightly of other things, with brown eyes alight, altogether holding her new husband's charmed attention: "—And this new railway we're on, Fred, the Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific, it is really going to the *Yukon*?"

Her husband, who was now helping her put on a coat, planted a kiss on the back of her neck—just below the neatly pinned psyche knot—then he answered: "I doubt that my dear, as strongly as you." There was a twinkle in the banker's eye. Perhaps he already knew that this railway was destined to get no closer to the Yukon than its few miles of track beyond the station in Strathcona.

The local newspaper printed a lengthy account of the wedding of one of its "prominent and esteemed citizens" and

added that: ". . . Mrs. MacConnell, the former Miss Beatrice McArthur of Dundas, Ontario, will be a distinct acquisition to the social and educational life of our community, having served as a teacher in our local school most efficiently and well ——." At this Birdie's lips twisted wryly, recalling the school board's politely worded rejection of an application to teach another year.

However, she actually did become that "distinct acquisition" to the social life of the big growing town, which the newspaper editor predicted. She was a naturally good organizer, and breathed new life into the "Drama club," the "Literary Guild," and many church charitable societies. Whenever a benefit concert or any new venture was undertaken, people looked to Mrs. "Mac," as she became affectionally known, for the wit, energy and enthusiasm to carry it to success.

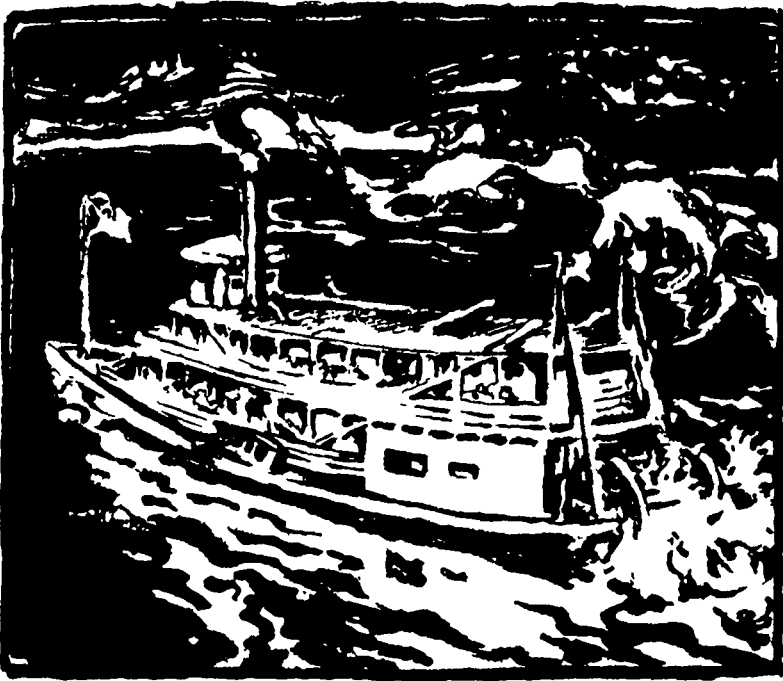
Again it neared Christmas. A special concert was being given by the church choir. Birdie, back among the audience, was held in wrapt attention listening to the singing glory of the aria: "*He shall feed his flock, like a she-e-p-herd ——.*" Her eyes filled with tears. "There is something in that girl's singing that is divine," said Birdie, "only a child of fourteen and her voice fills the church like the call of an angel—where does such rare quality come from? The rest of the Weldons are neither gifted nor unusual looking. I felt so sorry for that shy overgrown girl when she first came to town school and the other youngsters—oh, the cruelty of children!—called her a 'half-breed.' But with that gift for singing—no one need pity her."

"*Take His yoke up-on you, and learn—of—Him ——.*" Brilliant tones now came in high register, but as effortlessly delivered as were the low: "*—— and ye shall find—rest—, —— and ye shall find rest unt-o-o— your souls.*"

The pensive thoughts of the listening woman wandered. She thought of another voice that had often thrilled her with its peculiar timbre and power, a different kind of strength that bespoke a certain strength of soul; filled deep with kind-

ness and human understanding. Was Tom Grant alive? Would she ever hear his voice again? And womanlike, she yearned to renew, have again that precious, as to be almost unheard of, thing: friendship with a man.

As the years of an all too full life went by, Birdie never ceased to listen for that voice and sometimes, she thought she *heard* it.



Chapter Fifteen

Holiday Excursion On a Big Boat

THE blazing heat of that stove! "That's the way it *always* gets on ironing day," muttered the girl to herself as she stopped to take another damp tightly rolled piece from the big laundry basket at her feet. "Pokey—slow, until the coal gets started and then my! how hot."

Pauline ran questing fingers over the big white mound of dampened laundry; "Mother's petticoat with tucks and two

embroidered ruffles—mine with one; papa's stiff front shirt; and then just aprons and the boys' things—no need being particular about those."

Slowly, achingly, she raised herself upright; passed her forearm up across a heated flushed face, where wisps of dark hair clung to her forehead. The deep flush upon her cheeks singularly enhanced the girl's warmly tinted skin, a loose ill fitting dress could not conceal a youthful form of ripe development.

"It'll take me nearly two hours to finish," was the girl's conjecture, "and it's eight now—funny, it seems earlier with it so light. I might be through by ten—anyway, I can't leave it for tomorrow, or I'll have too much work to do on the holiday."

With this pressing resolve she turned hurriedly to grasp a fresh sad iron amongst a hot—very hot—nest of five on the stove. But no sooner was it lifted than again released back on the stove with a clatter. The girl knelt quickly to open the heavy oven door. A whiff of burning bread had warned her just in time. "Certainly not done though," she decided, emitting long upward blowing breaths from an extended lower lip to mitigate the hot oven blast that assailed her.

Then, while straining in turning two heavily loaded tins; exchanging top one to bottom; came a thin tired voice from the front bedroom: "Pauline—Paul-leen-ne!"

"Yes, Mama, what is it?" called back the girl above the scraping of the pans.

"You'll be careful not to scorch the starched clothes? It's papa's best Sunday shirt, you know, and the boys ——."

"Oh no, Mother—I'm watching! It's just that the coal's got started, that's the heat you smell."

And the girl began to trill a bit of song, more to reassure her mother—'mother' who was lying abed in her downstairs bedroom, 'sick' again; 'mother' always so prone to fuss and worry about things. More and more as her secretly adopted daughter grew up, did Mrs. Weldon lapse into her sick 'spells'

and remain abed; not being *really* sick like typhoid fever, pneumonia or anything like that; just 'sick'. The others of the family, the father and two younger brothers had long ceased to manifest concern over this matter—naturally, their big sister would remain home from school on these occasions to do the necessary household tasks, that was all.

It had passed almost unnoticed when Pauline remained home altogether after Christmas. Pauline had said: "—With Aunt Norah gone away to grandpa's and the pump¹ always freezing up and all —."

Secretly she was relieved to be away from school. Many former absences had made it increasingly difficult to keep up her standing with others in her grade, and though kindly, understanding teachers had mercifully ceased to put all but very easy questions to her in the classroom, term examinations had been only too revealing. And though the other school children had long since forgotten those slights she received when newly come to town school five years ago, Pauline would never quite recover from the hurt of those taunts: "Hello, big squaw girl—" "How's Pauly 'Pow-Wow' today?" Then Morley's fist would strike out at the jeering one, fights and bloody noses followed. All because of herself. Somehow school ever since was of dread to her—and mother had fretted not a little about things, especially about her low marks; but then she became ill again and Bob stayed home, too, because of his bronchitis; after which the matter was completely forgotten.

The girl told herself that it didn't matter—not much anyway—whether she finished the High School or not, and *now* she could really learn her parts in the Sunday anthem as well as no longer be embarrassed by a consciousness of her figure of full grown womanhood amongst all those High School students of slim immaturity.

She was content, happy at home, and more often than not sang at her work—not only those sacred songs for the choir on Sunday, but those homely old Welsh folk tunes that father sang and loved so well. "Yn nyffryn clwyd," Pauline now

hummed in low breathy tones, as she continued to iron out the yards of stiffly starched embroidered petticoat ruffles.

Her voice had an extraordinary depth and richness and her delight in singing was apparent. A sort of rapturous glow suffused her youthful and comely features, as she sang, that brought to her face something of rare beauty.

It was so easy to sing! high, or deep and low; it made no difference. Yet they were always telling her that she must learn 'voice control'—that she should know 'how to breathe' (as though one could possibly *not* know!) and 'take vocal training' they said. Why even their minister had spoken quite seriously to father about that—offering to enlist the assistance that wealthy and influential friends in the east might give her, that way.

"A pretty state of affairs if I should be away from home and mother on such a day as *this!*" Pauline was thinking, while what a joy it was to sing always—any time you wanted—whenever you felt that compelling power of tone-giving surging up from deep inside.

"So unusual a gift of voice for song should be developed and used for a great purpose," was what Reverend McEwan had said—and Ned!—Ned had said she put the birds to shame!

What fun it had been! And how the girls had giggled over it, crying gleefully: Oh Pauly, Pauly, do it again! Then followed song after song with their voices carrying far down the dark river. The young crowd had sat clustered close together on the deck; somewhat weary after their strenuous day on the island.

But by and by, in the more serious songs, one by one, they had paused in singing just to listen to that gloriously deep voice, which made their own seem so thin and insignificant. There was something almost awesome about Pauline when she was singing. They drifted away in twos and threes—all but Ned—Ned had remained seated close beside her, and they were left; she singing for him alone.

His arm had crept behind her on the boat's rail; she felt his hand press in at her underarm, his eyes were teasing, gay: "You know my favorite?" he asked, and began it, whisperingly—"Once in the dear dead days of long ago ——."

"Love's Old Sweet Song"; she knew it well, and sang it then to please him.

A bit of its sentimental strains came from her lips as she went on with the ironing. Then suddenly she paused—eyes darkened—with breath caught sharply in a little thrill of ecstasy—recalling that swift caress, when Ned had yielded to an irresistible impulse to touch that vital, pulsating throat so close to his gaze.

Had any of the others seen? It was quite dark by that time, but they had known that he was hers—*hers*—and left them quite alone together.

Ned was new to the town—didn't know about her voice; that she was doing almost all the solo work for the choir now.

It had been noticeable all that day on the excursion trip to the island how the girls were vying with one another for his attentions.

Older, more at ease with them than the others of their young crowd, was this Ned Farnham, still in his South African officer's uniform, soon to be exchanged for that scarlet coated one of the Mounted Police.

He must have been mildly amused at their juvenile chatter, the covert glances cast him by the girls. He had thoroughly enjoyed that boat trip to the island and their dancing on the top deck upon returning. "Enchanted isle" those youngsters had called it, and someone had said it was an "enchanted boat" too.

Only Annie, the hoyden, fifteen—with skirts as yet only half way down, hadn't seemed in awe of him. She had ragged him in her gruff tomboy way—about his military stride, his mustachios, and everything. The seventeen year olds had arched their brows in shocked prettiness over her beckoning

him across the crowded deck, calling loudly: "C'mon over here so's I c'n sit on yer kneel!"

Annie was comical as anything that way.

Would she tell Betty? Betty was her best friend, though a year or so older than herself—eighteen—she would understand. Yes, Betty would realize the importance of having a real beau, a serious lover, who kissed you and said, while dancing very close: "This is how I like to hold the most wonderful girl in the world." Certainly one couldn't tell mother or father anything like that, and as for the boys—the less they knew of her affairs the better!

"Gracious! The bread!" Out from the oven came the loaves, baked a lovely crisp brown. While covering them with a white tea cloth, there came a clattering racket from the back yard. Then followed a sputtering of firecrackers. Morley and Robert were home. Morley had been to band practice. They were going to have their new uniforms to play in the band tomorrow. Another cracker went off with quite a bang. "Boys! Boys!" Pauline called out, "stop that noise out there, mama's trying to sleep!"

Momentary stillness—smothered laughter, and then the boys burst in the doorway—two stripling youths in their early teens, with Morley, the older, carrying a black case that held his prized cornet.

They were stirred up, talking eagerly together. Their sister had difficulty in claiming attention for her demands: "Mother says you're to bathe tonight—the rain water's hot in the reservoir, and mind you don't slop it all over taking it upstairs, you twol"

They went on talking. She caught fragments of it: "—putting on yards and yards of bunting—she'll go up at two o'clock—maybe have to make two trips to get all the crowd on —."

Ah! the boat—the excursion boat—that would now always bring back the enchantment of that night. She saw it again, the churning water over the stern wheel, the lights dancing

on the dark waters—and tomorrow, Dominion Day holiday, it was going to happen all over again. For Ned was going too—he had told her he'd take the boat trip every chance he could—perhaps he would have asked to escort her even, if things hadn't gone against it. That was when he was taking her home. It was quite a long walk from the pier below McDougall hill, and when they came to the narrow two-plank walk near home, he had put his arm around her again and maybe he would have kissed her too—but just then they overheard heavy footsteps coming on the walk behind and Ned had dropped his arm. And when the footsteps came up close—overtook them, it was father. He now worked late in the mines because the new railway needed so much more coal.

After her startled introduction they had come, presently, to where the plank walk ended—on the path through the bush, when Ned mumbled something to dad about “a long way for a girl to come home alone,” tipped his hat and turned back towards town.

It had felt awfully peculiar—dad's coming upon them just then. She had scarcely known what to talk about the rest of the way home. And papa had been strange too, asking her if mother was all right, when he must have known she was perfectly well that day!

Her thoughts were arrested by the banging of the front screen door. She turned just in time to see that it was Betty, who nearly collided with Bob in the hallway, carrying up his full, too full, pail of hot bath water.

“Mercy on me!” screeched Betty, jerking aside and grasping up the skirt of her new pink dress to avoid the splash of water. “Another new dress,” Pauline noted, “that must have taken her mother simply *hours*!” But Mrs. Hudson, she knew, loved nothing better than to ‘fix up’ pretty blonde Betty. Her hair was now frizzed out of all conscience under her leghorn hat. Pauline felt sure she must be planning to go some place.

Betty stopped at the kitchen doorway, reluctant to enter the over-heated room where her friend stood amid all those signs

of household activity. Her glance showed dismay, disapproval, and then turned to faint distaste as it came to rest on Pauline's shapeless cotton dress. "Shouldn't wonder if it weren't her mother's," thought Betty, noting darkly wet semicircles at the underarms of the despised dress.

"Say, can't ya come along down town? They're putting up flags and everything and it's simply grand out," said Betty a bit pettishly, realizing little hope for her request.

"Oh Betty, I'd love to. But there's all this ironing to do yet and mother's sick again today ——."

But Betty had already turned away. She stalked into the front room. There she spied the parlor organ. Pauline heard the instrument giving forth abrupt spasmodic utterance, just the way Betty always caused it to sound. At Betty's house there was a piano and she was 'taking lessons.'

"Betty," Pauline cried suddenly, "I thought you were going to *tell* me about your lessons?"

"Ungh, those lessons! You simply can't imagine! He tells me I must practice my *arpeggios*, scales and chords. He's always talking about things like the 'tonic' chord—next lesson I'm to have the *dominant* chords, dominant *sevenths* if you please! It's hardly what you'd call *music* at all." Her words implied that Pauline was well out of it, not missing a thing.

Pauline felt somewhat dashed. She had really hoped to receive benefit from those lessons of Betty's at second-hand—without obligatory lesson fees, which the Weldons could ill afford.

"——Then they're these *fugues*," Betty went on, snapping and snatching at the key-board, "he says it means 'to chase or run.' Honestly, I feel like telling him I'd just as soon run from the whole darn business myself!"

Pauline wished she'd stop playing now. It was only disturbing mother anyway, and as though the thought were divined, Betty suddenly ceased to play, banged in the stops, muttering: "I don't see how you play this thing anyway, it sounds simply awful!" With which she whisked her pink flounces from the

organ stool and left, in some disdain over the whole Weldon household; its occupants, its musical instrument, its bathing facilities, and all and sundry regarding the matter of musical training.

Pauline heard the brief "S'long" and quick departing steps of her friend leaving their small front porch. She was left to her own thoughts again: "I should have told her," she thought ruefully, "how our organist praised the fine tone of our organ, and that he liked it better than the bigger, hand-pumped one at church, even. Betty just doesn't know organs, that's all."

She began to hum and sing once more.

Upstairs the boys were still racketing about. When would they learn to behave? She called to them in admonishing tones.

"We're hungry—we want something to eat!" they answered. "Mother—can't we have ——." And again Mrs. Weldon's tired voice was raised asking that they be given a 'piece.'

Pauline began at once to slice pieces from a fresh loaf on the table. This was no sooner done than the brothers were down in their longish nightshirts, their heads still shiny and wet from recent ablutions. While she stooped down to the bin to scoop up more sugar to put on Bob's slice, Morley dropped a pinch taken from his slice down his sister's neck; just where her dress collar gaped widely below the dark 'pug' of knotted hair.

"Oh you divill!" cried Pauline hotly, whirling about to cuff him soundly. But they were both out of reach in an instant—bounding gleefully up the stairs, two at a time.

There still remained a little more to iron. Next she would start that shirt of dad's. Her white mull dress was already ironed, looking fresh and dainty on the rack. "If I'm careful it'll do for Sunday too—I mustn't forget to press the blue sash that goes with it, she reminded herself, while expertly running her iron over a small pad of wax, preparatory to doing the front 'boards' of father's shirt.

A shy smile hovered about her lips—being reminded of something Father had said at their noon meal. "In my day," he began in mock seriousness, "we used to say a lass shouldn't think of getting married until she could bake bread, save money and iron a *biled shirt*." She had felt her face blush hot at seeing a supercilious glance exchanged between Bob and Morely. Well, then certainly, she *could* think of getting married—for look how nicely this boiled shirt was coming along, and that bread on the table smelled mighty good too! As for money—one couldn't tell—how would a girl have any to save, until she was married?

The starched shirt cuff curled in a graceful ellipse over the iron as it was smoothed back and forth, stroked to ever greater stiffness and gloss.

Then Pauline began to play a little game of "make believe." She was now Ned's wife, and this was his shirt she was ironing.

With utmost, almost fervent care, she continued to ply the iron, head bent low, lips pressed in, firmed with the added effort of her task. It was no longer work—it was fun—even washing—baking —.

Her eyes brightened as she envisioned the ardour, zest and delight she would know in those services as the spouse of her new found lover. The garment finished, she began folding it carefully leaving the cuffs upright over the stiff bosom.

She became quiet, thoughtful. A little unhappy feeling of guilt possessed her—as of being disloyal: to have wished the shirt to be other than father's! Father—who wore it on Sundays—elder's meeting night—causing mother to eye him with pride. She never was reconciled to his dark, sooty, mine clothes. Father—who had to work so hard for their living, content with just his paper and pipe when at home. And for a moment she was given over to wonderment of that strange phenomenon; mating love, that had come to her with such incredible swiftness, utterly bewildering her senses!

The room was going dark. She must light the lamp. From the wall shelf above she brought down a tall glass lamp, which

she had cleaned to shining brightness that morning. It was going to be nice having electric lights some day—and just twist a button on the wall for light like Betty's folks did in their big house on Third Street.²

The boys had finally quieted upstairs. She would go up to fetch her ribbon sash. Lifting the lamp carefully in one hand and picking up laundered linen in the other, she stepped softly upstairs. Reaching the first landing she could not resist pausing in spite of weariness, to gaze out the hall window into the soft summer night.

After ten and still some light in the west! Did Betty go down town after all? It would have been *fun* to have gone down town!

Below she could see the vegetable garden, back fence, and the low uneven sloughy³ ground beyond a copse where they always tethered the cow. Skirting their cow pasture was a glimpse of that elevated plank walk which would presently resound in a steady *blang, blung—blang, blung*, with the tread of father's homecoming.

Tomorrow night though—on the holiday, there would be no need of those intrusive foot-steps to come upon her. They could walk slowly—quietly *alone*—in the darkening night—home.

"If only it wouldn't rain tomorrow! That would spoil everything! If only it would be like this night just once more! Then it would be lovely—lovely——."

* * * * *

The early summer sun rose in a clear sky, with a promise of heat. It shone splendidly down on the scraggling Alberta town, on this, the morning of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Dominion's birth. By midmorning it was blistering, with the resinous pitch in knot-holes of new sidewalk lumber oozing—sticky, wet. Already there was a goodly number of people

on the streets, dressed in their gayest best. Boots were freshly blacked and shining. Here and there a bright coloured ribbon showed on the fair braids of a child, on men's "boater straws" worn jauntily on one side.

Children—girls—were invariably in white, which made them easily distinguishable, even at a distance, from the Indian or half-race youngsters, whose garments were all gaudily coloured.

On a large open grassy plot between Brown's store and Ross's Hardware, were encamped the Indians from Hobbema Reserve. Their magenta, orange and cerise shawls were brilliant in the sun. Their older menfolk, some of them chiefs, sat cross-legged in comfort before a tepee that had been raised for the day. They had frankly come to watch the spectacle before them. They pulled on their long pipes, blinked—waited. The young bucks, on the other hand, were restive. They strutted about, a little self-consciously. They wore large black felt hats having decorated bands and handsomely beaded vests. They rode their ponies well and were eager to begin the races about to take place.

Up and down, up and down—folks walked, turned about, mingled—enjoying the springy new sidewalk they stepped; enjoying, too, the occasional stop to greet old friends or neighbours—"Well! Well! And how's —?" would be the inevitable opening words of their meeting.

Already the hitching poles along the walks were tied with scores of teams with wagons; 'democrats' and smaller buggies that had brought all the folk living out of town, who, oddly enough, had reached the scene of celebration earlier than the town's people living close at hand.

The horses stomped, shook their manes, switched their tails at the ever-present and bothersome mosquito. The people, too, were in continual movement in defense from the wee stinging pests. They waved their hands, slapped their cheeks, shoulders and arms. Now and again they would give way to a sudden involuntary grimace, with teeth clenched, while conversing

with one another. There was the odd person who appeared with mosquito netting attached, suspended from a hat brim. This would nearly always call for a special word and laugh. "Trying to corral a few, Joe?" they'd say jocularly. Actually the netting would be removed before long. It was bothersome—in the way—and not entirely proof either.

As the noon hour passed the crowds increased. They stood in clusters under the welcome shade offered by store awnings. A sports program was in progress. Firecrackers were popping off in goodly numbers, mostly small ones—(the big ones being kept for nightfall)—these were being shot off by the younger boys who revelled in the shrill cries they evoked from the girls. The sputtering 'pops' brought discomfiture to the horses too. They jerked their heads nervously up and back—pulled halter ropes taut when some big bang came too close at hand.

A spirited young filly in sudden panic had kicked free and jumped over her buggy shaft. Straightway a group of people collected about the rig and on the sidewalk in front. Amazing, how quickly a crowd gathered to watch this trivial incident. Idling about, without much to focus their attention, they found here, at last, something to look at. They jostled, queried, laughed at the half-hearted attempts of someone who tried to reinstate the creature in proper harness. "Poor frightened animal" came from a sympathetic onlooker, in the agreeable deep throaty voice of Pauline Weldon. Pauline was radiant today in her best white dress with the blue ribbon sash tied at the waist, her face was fairly alive with eager expectancy, health, and fresh all out of doors. Betty, Dora Clarke and Annie were there too, with Charlie and Fred hovering nearby—but as yet Pauline's watchful eyes had seen no sight of that tall uniformed figure, without whom, for her, the day would scarcely be complete.

However, there was still some time before the boat would be sailing up the river—she wouldn't give up. Her bright hazel eyes scanned the thronging masses hopefully.

Suddenly they could hear the music of a brass band coming from Kinistino⁴ Avenue. Like magic the crowd dispersed, moved towards that gladsome stirring sound—the predicament of the horse and broken harness forgotten—left to the concern of the owner.

Immediately Jasper Avenue was lined on both sides with people watching the twelve uniformed players march by with the drums 'zoom booming' terrifically.

Pauline saw Morley. How grown up, handsome, he was looking. Was it possible that that manly person in uniform was the boy with whom she had engaged in fisticuffs that very morning? His face was earnest, his eyes steadfastly ahead on his music. He had practised diligently and was playing well. Pauline thought Morley had their father's music as she had. She felt a quick surge of pride for her brother.

The band was lustily cheered—applauded. The people on the street followed it on and on—would have marched anywhere with it as long as it played that stirring martial refrain over and over again. They came to the dead end at the top of the hill on the river bank. Down below could be seen the big white boat. It made a fine sight, standing proudly in the shining water alongside the wharf, bedecked with red, white and blue bunting and many flags. After that, nothing could keep them, the young folk—from going down the steps to the boat landing, to gain a closer view of the vessel. The steam was up—huge ice-cream freezers, covered with gunny sacking, were being stowed in the hold.

How long before the boat would sail? "Oh, not for a while yet!" The captain was strolling alongside. He was a tall, imposing, sandy-haired Scotsman. He assured them there would be ample warning whistles before sailing.

Ned, Pauline noted, wasn't down there either, Charlie, however, was forever at their heels, cutting up for fair, teasing Betty as usual. Pauline wished he'd stop this silliness, making Betty squeal and giggle so. Up those steps they all romped, holding hats and skirts against a freshening breeze. Charlie,

purposely, lagged behind. He cast an occasional, oh, ever so casual, upward glance at those billowing, gyrating skirts above black-stockinged legs ahead.

"Just one ruffle at the knee of the bigger one's drawers—two daintily scalloped ones on that slimmer pair," he observed—but, of course, Betty was a kind of extra special girl, too.

They reached the top, panting and short of breath. Charlie ran the last few steps to overtake the girls; and was just in time to catch one of Betty's sash-ends as she reached the final step. He yanked it so that the knot gave. "Charlie Burton! you great big cray-zee you!" Betty scolded in an exaggerated dismay. Charlie, at eighteen summers, somewhat undersized, couldn't have received a reproof more to his taste. Pauline helped re-tie the sash, and saw Charlie swagger ahead in pretended unconcern.

When she looked up, her glance caught the khaki-coloured figure of Ned Farnham among the others approaching down the street. Her eyes beheld an astonishing sight. At his side was a slight stylish young lady with her hand—a *gloved* hand—on his arm. Everyone was looking at her, even older people were turning their heads in curiosity over this young stranger, clad so differently from their own womenfolk—in a 'citified' way. Pauline saw the trim slimness of that beautifully fitted jacket and involuntarily her hand flew to her own waist, where the sash had well nigh disappeared in the warm folds of her full young torso. "Well, look't the blue bird Ned's found," came in a surprised undertone from Annie. And like a blue bird she looked, as she came towards them, stepping daintily in her small pointed shoes; dressed all in a heaven-blue colour, her little hat made of flowers, with its upright bow like tiny pointed wings atop.

Pauline felt her heart beating hard within. She swallowed—rubbed her damp palms together—struggled to appear merely surprised and interested.

So this was the niece of his Aunt Grace—on the other side of the Farnham family. She remembered now; a girl expected

for a visit—one Aunt Grace wanted him to 'look after' on the holiday—'make at home with young folks here'. Pauline had pictured the niece to be a juvenile—had had an inward thought to enlist the help and company of Bob and her Sunday School class of girls! Now they were coming closer, walking with a party of elegant grown-ups—important townspeople—Ned scarcely taking his eyes from his attractive charge.

Almost at once they came upon them with Ned suddenly aware of the presence of his young friends. In an expansive gesture that included Betty, Annie, Dora and others with herself, he said amiably: "Oh Flo! here are some of the *girls* of this town!"

The 'girls' writhed—shouldered one another—giggled in self-conscious maidenly embarrassment; the while shyly appraising 'Flo' at this nearer view.

They saw the large blue eyes widen perceptibly at them under the fine lacy veil, but the small, full-pouted lips never moved. Her slightly petulant expression plainly said that should a situation offer something funny, she, Flo, would laugh too—otherwise why all this unseemly merriment?

Fortunately for them all, everyone's attention was just then drawn to something unusual, below on the river. A most strange and interesting sight was there. A motor on a small boat was sounding a noisy puck-pucketting. The boat was skimming the water at an alarming speed, without oars of any kind, like a runaway wagon without horses!

Presently a shrill blast came from the 'City of Edmonton' as a first warning whistle for passengers to embark for the island trip. There was a general move towards the steps down to the boat. On the way down Pauline caught snatches of talk between some little girls. One child she recognized as Geneva, one of her Sunday School class, who lived near the Farnhams—the home of Ned's Aunt Grace.

"She's been to a ladies' college—came with her father on the train —," went on Geneva's voice, proud in the

possession of so much information—"——in a car that was their own—they slept in it and ate in it—it *belonged* to her father!"

Pauline hastened on to get with her own 'crowd.' One thought was uppermost in her mind—to be unnoticed, lost from view, at all costs not to be seen by Ned and that haughty young person with him. She reached the rail of the second deck, where her friends already stood watching the crowd coming on board the boat. The boat was going to be filled to capacity.

Dora Clarke had some cousins from Clover Bar, a girl and a boy with her—she heard the girl say—"Whee, all that powder on her face"—then Betty, drawling "Well, certainly, she's got a lot more on than my mother'd let me wear." They all laughed, Pauline too, though she felt at heart that it was silly, just silly, talking about the powder on her face, as if *that* mattered! What mattered was—but Pauline refused resolutely to consider, even to herself, what it was that mattered.

There they were, coming down the steps, Flo holding her skirts firmly in one hand, while Ned still supported her by the arm as though he were handling something infinitely precious. "Better hang on to her or she'll break to pieces," commented Annie, looking away in disgust. Another member of her group began reciting in ironical undertone: "*She was a vision of delight when first she beamed upon my sight ——.*" Others took it up in a chanting syllabic sing-song: "*A love-ly apparition sent—to-be-a—mo-ments—orn-a-ment.*" And "Be BAH-ba, ba-ba, BAH, ba-ba, de DAH-da da da DEE de da—" chorused the boys behind them in mocking derision.

Pauline remembered this poem they had learned when she was still in school. She tried to enter their spirit of raillery, appear happily amused.

The rest of the time before embarkation her attention and that of the others on the starboard side was diverted to Buster Johnston's accident. Buster had been a bit too eager in opening a corked bottle of pop, knocking it hard on the rail to "blow"

the loosened cork. The top had broken, the flying jagged glass gashing his wrist badly. Buster was howling in more fright than pain as he watched the blood run down his hand. The other children viewed it in horror. "He's got to be taken to a doctor!" they called in alarm. Only Pauline had the presence of mind to offer her clean handkerchief to staunch the blood, speak reassuringly to Buster before he was led off to receive first aid.

In the confusion that Buster had brought about she had not seen Ned, with his party, come on deck. They certainly wouldn't be likely to mingle with all these young people around her. Florence was young, too, but that was different. When a young person was so stylishly dressed, had attended a ladies' college and came to town in a private car, she was eligible to remain in the society of dignified older people—that *rated* you!

But here was another long whistle and the boat was beginning to sail. A fearful churning began, Pauline felt the tremor, the vibration from the throbbing engine below. It electrified, excited everyone. A perfect furore of nautical business ensued. There were shouts, sounding bells, as many hands caught the bow and stern lines. As is always the case when a vessel slowly moves from land, everyone stood to watch, stirred by the procedure. The big boat backed slowly into the current, avoiding a sandbar on the shore side, then gracefully as a swan, with her flags floating in a stiffening breeze, the City of Edmonton made her way up the winding river.

On Big Island a temporary platform and bleachers had been built of clean, fresh smelling lumber—also a small lemonade stand. The boat disgorged passengers and the seats were immediately filled. The band players grouped in front of the speakers' platform, adding their lustre to the scene.

The program began with speeches, none of which were heard, nor of interest to Pauline and her companions, except the final one, given by the newspaper editor, whose terse,

energetic address was so direct and urgent as to bring even Betty to attention. The speaker deplored the lethargy of those lacking proper sense of patriotic responsibility in governmental affairs. His oratory had the fire of the born public speaker. "He gets people's backs up," Pauline overheard someone say laconically. For a brief while she forgot the painful circumstances of the day and gave over to thoughts of the true meaning of this, her country's day of commemoration.

As the afternoon waned there was some relief from the hot sun by big fleecy, cumulus clouds that brisk winds blew overhead. People predicted a shower before the day would end.

A program number was given by the school children from Clover Bar. Pauline saw among them some of the children she knew and remembered from her country school days. Their teacher and leader brought them to stiff attention, making abrupt, spasmodic motions with a baton. They sang two choruses in the high pitched, piping tones of children—the second being the "Maple Leaf." This was sung in the usual lack lustre, dragged out manner of school children, singing the too-familiar song the world over, until the final chorus, when a heightened interest—expectant look, was noticed on the singers' faces. Their eyes became intent upon that swinging baton before them, and with the final "scoopy" chordal tone cadences of "*God Save Our King and Heaven Bless the Maple Leaf For Ever*"; up came in the hand of each child a large cardboard square upon which was either pressed, or crudely painted, a maple leaf.

There was a spattering—then prolonged applause, which nearly lasted until the children and their conductor left the platform—with older, bigger boys jumping off the back rather than awaiting the careful descent of "first graders" on three steep steps to the ground

"Even if this *isn't* the end, let's get away anyway," implored Betty.

Charlie and the two girls left the seating stand crammed with people, and followed one of the paths that led away from the clearing into the dense green thicket that covered nearly all of Big Island. It was delightfully fresh, cool and secluded on the wooded path. It felt soothing and momentarily Pauline was at peace. Here she was safe. They found many berry bushes with some early ripened raspberries and saskatoons, which they picked and ate on the way.

"Oh look at the big bug on your arm," she heard Charlie exclaim in mock horror. There followed the inevitable squeal from Betty, then squirming. Pauline's face showed irritation—she paid no attention. Would he never stop his everlasting tricks? "Charlie, can't you behave yourself? I declare to goodness you're a plain nuisance to us!" she said after he had shot some green gooseberries at her. Charlie ignored her words.

They walked on and on, coming to the far end of the island, occasionally meeting others, mostly younger school children. They saw that some were taking off their shoes and stockings for wading in shallows of the river. This was forbidden, and they knew it! Pauline saw Buster among them, his wrist nicely bandaged now, lead them in. "Maybe we'd better stay here and *watch* them at least," urged Pauline. "So's we can *see* them drown?" was Charlie's sarcastic rejoinder.

The seemingly endless afternoon dragged on and with the evening's approach the sultry air was lifted by a whispering, sibilant breeze over the tree tops. A thunder storm was making in the west. It showed huge and dark on the horizon. A greyish white curtain of rain swayed ominously below.

Every little while lightning flicked and thunder rumbled. It made them all somewhat uneasy. "Whe-e-e! just look, it's going to rain like everything," the youngsters called aloud as they hurried into their shoes and stockings.

Pauline rose, reluctant to make that necessary start back to the boat on the other side of the island. She steeled herself inwardly against that probable second encounter with Ned

and the arrogant Florence Mowbray (now she even remembered her last name) at his side. She must try to find Annie, Dora, Dick, the cousins—*anybody* so that she wouldn't appear too conspicuously alone when that dreaded meeting would take place. She lost sight of Betty's pink skirts for a moment. Those two had gone ahead of her again on a path that branched off the main one—they seemed to be picking berries, scarcely observant of her approach. "Nice little retreat you've found," Pauline remarked amiably. "Hardly that *now*," was Charlie's dry answer. Betty smothered a giggle that ended in a wail—Charlie this time had squashed a saskatoon against her cheek. It made a messy purple stain. Pauline felt hot indignation. "Haven't you got a scrap of sense?" Her voice had unconsciously become edged, as she helped Betty wipe the mess from her face. "What's it to you, Fatty?" came the tart answer from Charlie, flinging that hated word as he ran ahead with Betty. "What poor Betty has to take from a shrimp like you!" Pauline panted back, finding it hard to keep up with her more fleet companions. Just as they came to a fork in the pathway she caught up to them. They stood, apparently waiting for *her* to lead this time.

Pauline addressed Betty: "Shall we go this way?" she said, choosing a way to the right. Betty's face was sullen. She offered no answer.

"See you later, after your tongue's cooled off," Charlie snapped, and he grasped Betty's hand, pulling her with him on the other way.

Pauline kept straight on her way, going faster and faster—fairly quivering with anger from that taunt. Now she knew what she had only suspected before, they were trying to get rid of her—were actually running away from her! "That insolence from Charlie—the little whelp—I'll never speak to him again—never—*never*!" she muttered fiercely over and over again. With clenched hands she fought the branches all about that impeded her way. She was getting deeper and deeper in the thicket, scarcely realizing where she was going,

what she was doing! "And to think of Betty!—Betty taking *his* side when I was doing everything to defend her!"

Sharp lightning and a terrific clap of thunder rent the air—the tree tops began a shivering motion like people in fright—there was a 'splot,' 'splot' sound as big raindrops hit the leaves. "Oh dear God! the storm is breaking—what shall I do?" The girl looked wildly about to find some shelter—heavier, more protecting trees.

Not far away she could hear the voices of children: "Hurry! Hurry! Let's run—let's get back to the boat!"

She thought she heard Bob's voice among them. For a moment she wavered as to whether she should try to catch up with them. But to come back in the company of *children*, looking like this—never—*never!* It was bad enough being "one of the town's girls" and at least presentable. Her path had entirely petered out. Like a hunted creature she pressed on through the thicket, seemingly unmindful of sharp branches that snagged nastily, caught her garments on all sides. Her stockings were rent; her flimsy white dress ripped at the shoulder. She struggled on, bent on reaching some big trees that she saw ahead.

The rain was coming down hard now—she dashed clear of the brush and came right out to the edge of the island, where wind came so strongly it took away her breath. Below her was the lashing river water. She gasped, leaned to the wind, tried to gain the remaining distance by running on the edge of the steep embankment to gain those fir trees. In the same instant she was tripped headlong by a projecting bush root, went hurtling down the steep embankment, with earth and gravel falling, avalanching, with her. She shrieked, clutched desperately, rolled, slid, down, down. A clayey ledge a few feet above the river held her. Dazed, bruised, shaken out of mind, she tried to rise, when a stinging blow struck her on the top of her head. Then there was another and another. She flinched and cowered from those blows. Blindly she saw bobbing white spots about her. It was hail! With it

was a deafening roar of sound. Pauline choked and cried out in real agony of terror and unbearable pain. She crouched low beside some rocks—instinct bade her protect her head. She pulled her heavy cotton underskirt up over herself like a canopy, and all over she was beaten as with stones. She continued to scream in a frenzy. "Scream—scream—scream, or you'll die—or you'll die!" a sort of benumbed consciousness told her. Then gradually the flaying blows stopped, her screams subsided to sobs, terrible, throat-catching sobs.

All that day the proud head had been held high, with face carefully masked. With physical pain came release. She cried aching on and on—couldn't even stop. There was no one to hear her—no one to care. She was all alone—her misery complete—no longer secret. She lay with body tightly curled, close to those protecting stones against the upright embankment. The petticoat covering made her head and shoulders feel warm. The prolonged wails became little moans; the little moans became whimperings, slowly her arms relaxed, she closed her eyes. In an exhaustion far greater than she'd ever known, Pauline fell asleep.

* * * * *

She never really knew what it was that brought her back to consciousness that incredible day: the blast of the big boat on the other side of the island, or that continuous 'put putting' sound from the motor boat far up the river, coming nearer and nearer, and then stopping abruptly with a gurgling sound. She felt stupefied, not quite awake, when another deep long blast came from the boat. This galvanized her to action. It was growing dark! It must be late—the sky was overcast with lowering clouds. She staggered to her feet, shivering violently, cold, stiff and aching all over. She must get back to the boat—right away, at all costs! She might be left behind!

Above her the embankment looked steep, impossible. She dropped the remaining distance to the river's edge. The rocks and pebbles were sharp—water splashed as she ran stumblingly on, but finally a ravine gave a pathway up that led across the island. She ran blindly, as hard as she could. She was dizzy and her head felt light. Surprisingly soon she saw the boat between the branches. It was lit up. Dancing was already in progress. She could hear the music. The cleared place was now deserted, it was cluttered with discoloured and bedraggled bunting that lay about. Two men were carrying the last of the planks that had made the temporary 'bleachers.' They gaped wonderingly at Pauline as she dashed past them, fled ahead of them straight into the hold of the boat. Breathing hard, she sank down weakly on a pile of coiled rope.

It was dimly lit down there and a heavenly warmth came from the engine. The captain came down the steps, glanced curiously about, saw the forlorn and woebegone figure of a girl, with dress bespattered with mud and clay.

"Well, noo, na lass should be as cauld and wet as thot," he said kindly.

Reaching for a greatcoat that was hanging on an upright post, he slipped the coat about Pauline's shivering form. She smiled wanly in gratitude.

The boat was already moving! She leaned against that warm, vibrating column at her side. She even dozed a little. Sounds of the music, dancing feet, even fragments of song, came down that metal cylinder, where her head rested. The column evidently ran right up to the top deck where the dancing was.

She watched a lanky, sandy-haired youth put some hunks of coal and wood in the fire box. "That storm was pretty bad, wasn't it?" he said, his lean freckled face with the bright eyes intent upon her.

The storm? "Oh, Yes! Yes!" Pauline nodded absently.

"See those two five gallon freezers?" he continued, pointing to something back of her in the hold—"all gone sour!—on account a-lightning."

"Ice cream?" Pauline hadn't eaten since noon. She had intended to partake of some refreshments on the boat at supper time—but she wasn't at all hungry, even now.

They had had a 'Sunday' dinner at noon because of the holiday. She had spent all morning in preparing it. Mother had got up, but felt so miserable she had gone back to bed. Bob had helped catch that chicken in the back yard. It had been hard to catch too. Then she had made 'floating island' for dessert, father's and the boys' favourite dessert.

Freckle Face was talking again. "They're not singing like they did the last trip," he was saying. "My, but it sounded great that night! One girl sang as sweet as ma's canary! I sure do like to listen when someone can sing real good like that!"

His listener's face began to show interest. It was a fine compliment—unconsciously given. He was trying to be sociable too, trying to make her feel more at home down there in the dark of the engine and freight hold.

How friendly, *nice* he was! She was comforted, warmed, throughout.

Yes, this was it! This was what she really wanted—the only thing that could make her happy—singing, her need to *sing*! Nothing else really mattered. She would do what their minister had advised—she must have known all along she would! Go away—go east—strive and live only for perfecting her singing. Work as hard as she could, practice unceasingly—all about voice control—right breathing—even those chords, the dominant "*sevens*"? that Betty disliked so. Aunt Norah would *have* to come back. She would learn and study the finest, best music in the world! Arias from operas and oratorios too, that their organist said she ought to be singing, with a voice such as she had.

Her spirits became strongly revived. She began to look more confident and hopeful. Her hair was still hanging down

loose on her shoulders. Dreamily she began to rake it, comb it with her fingers. Not a single hairpin was left. Deftly she made a center part in the long black tresses with her index finger, slowly braided them in a plait down each side, as she usually did before going to bed. The straight dark shafts of hair outlined, shadowed her oval face, lending it a chaste, madonna-like look. She was content to sit there quietly, deep in thought. Big, important things had happened inside her. Oddly enough, she no longer dreaded to face the people on the deck. By and by, she, too, was going upstairs when she was rested, to listen to the music and watch the dancing.

An older man had descended the steps, was talking to Freckle Face. "Those men hain't been sighted yet," he said, chewing ruminatively, and eyeing the open fire. "Musta gone a helluva long way up the river."

Pauline thought she'd better tell them: "If it's the motor boat, I heard it from the far end of the island shortly before we sailed." Immediately they began to question her, show real concern.

"Stopped sudden like? Hmph!"

When she came upstairs there was a crowd four and five deep standing at the rail to watch the dancers. Children were munching popcorn, looking wilted. No one took particular notice of her. Between heads in front of her she saw the whirling, hopping, two-stepping couples—young and old alike. Among them was Betty's familiar pink figure which Charlie was whirling expertly about, poised expertly on his tiptoes.

Charlie always was a good dancer!

Skirting the outer edge of the dance floor was Annie, bounding about with a lad in short pants. He came just to her shoulder, but was making up lack of stature by a fine display of energy and enthusiasm in the two-step. They came bouncing along at a great rate, a good arm's length apart. Yes, Annie was having a grand time.

Just as they neared the spectators' rail her eager eyes sighted Pauline. They lit with genuine astonishment. "Hey, *you*," she blurted, thrusting out her underjaw in Pauline's direction. Annie had missed her! Good old Annie.

Then she saw *them*. They came dancing elegantly down the polished floor. Ned was holding Flo very close—her face was perforce flattened sideways on his breast.

The hat, the gloves, had been removed and the cheeks no longer had the palely dusted look. She looks less different now, Pauline decided, more like the rest of us—now. Ned's head was bent low over his pretty partner. He was whispering in her ear. Pauline stood transfixed, fascinated, watching those moving lips. "Yes, he *was*—he *was* saying it: 'This is the way I like to hold the most wonderful girl' ——." Pauline glanced away, looked across the dark water towards the bluff beyond, where little twinkling lights showed far away in town. A curious smile played around her lips, and for the first time there was something superior, almost patronizing in the look she bent on that small glamorous person with Ned Farnham. The man in the uniform was now a stranger, a little fearsome and to her no longer wanted. How insincerity had blighted, belittled! Involuntarily Pauline stepped back as that couple neared—a needless precaution—for Ned Farnham, holding that daughter of a railway director so close in his arms had completely forgotten her existence.

As soon as the boat reached the landing, and passengers disembarked, everyone heard about the accident. Speedily the word was passed around and discussed in shocked, low tones. It was almost certain now that all three of the men in the motor boat were drowned when it had struck a hidden projection at high speed, mid-stream. Two hats and an oilskin coat, which were identified as belonging to the victims, had been picked up on shore west of town.

The "City of Edmonton" was making an immediate return trip up the river to stand by and aid in the rescue work. A number of men volunteered assistance. They would drag the river, find the bodies.

Mothers and fathers were at the landing to fetch their children. They snatched them, led them hastily away. They all scrambled up the hill like ants. In numbers they disappeared in the dark. They hurried to homes that would be lighted and cheerful, away from that inky black water, now horrendous and gruesome in the night. They went quickly from that river which had once more taken its toll of life.

Very soon there was no one in sight. It was empty and still down by the wharf—waves lapped the piles gently.

The holiday was over.

* * * * *

It was the last Sunday in July, the sun again poured its warm, bright rays upon that overgrown young town. Again boots were blacked and shined. Folks were dressed in their best—with the children—little girls in their white dresses, and boys, too, in blouses of white. But with a difference. Whereas on the celebration day they had romped about in careless freedom—today they marched sedately hand in hand in twos and threes either immediately before or behind their equally dignified parents.

Of gaudy garbed Indians there were none. Rather the scene was predominantly sombre, with black-suited men and the dark rustling silks of the matrons. The cheery, gladsome greeting, too, was subdued to the quiet nod of recognition—in truth, the townspeople were observing their Sabbath day.

To the churches of their respective denominations the townsfolk went, receptive, humble, grateful for this hour of communal worship. They would hear again the blessed familiar words known since childhood—see again their beloved priest or pastor before them.

Fine old hymns would be sung in lusty voice, the choir would offer an anthem. Always of special enjoyment was this. Should there be a solo too, let it be sung by that young Welsh

lass, Jake Weldon's girl, whose singing was so wonderfully melodious and full that it would bring the congregation to a peculiar intent quiet. They were glad to see that she was in her usual place in the choir loft this morning. She had been absent these past two or three Sundays. It was said she had been ill, had contracted a severe cold. Well, it was good to see she was better and back with them again. But what was this rumour going around that she was going to go away?—going East?—that would be a pity! Her singing would be missed—plenty. Actually there had been a noticeable increase in the number of the congregation in the past year since she had been singing in the church. People with Methodist leanings, even those from the Church of England, had come to this church, solely to hear this remarkable soloist. And the women said among themselves, how her mother was going to miss her—such a helper!—such a nice, *sensible* girl too!

The tall, gaunt figure of their minister arose. He announced the offering. Then they all saw the familiar, plainly clad figure in white rise in the choir. They settled back with satisfaction and content in as comfortable positions as pews permitted, to listen.

"Abide with me"—began the girl in low, tender and sustained voice;

"The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless. O abide with me!"

and rising in power, thrillingly intense:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away:
Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

She sang on, standing statuesque and still, hands loosely held at her breast, face upraised, eyes closed. She was remote, far from everyone—alone with her song. The rest only heard her,

her voice and her prayer. When the song ended, a hush deep, longer than usual prevailed. The girl had brought to her song an emotion so rare and profound as to surpass in effectiveness even what the superb technique of a great singer could give it. The minister, too, seemed reluctant to break that pause. He, too, had his eyes closed, and his head was bent in the familiar sideways pose of which Mrs. McHaddon had often said, "as though he were always hearkenin'—hearkenin'."

And this was the last Sunday that the good people of the congregation were to hear their glorious soloist sing the Offertory in their church service, for, shortly after, early in August, Pauline did go away and never afterwards returned. Through the minister, her father had in some mysterious way found wherewithal for her to travel and study in the East.

They, at home, heard of her strenuous program of study in the far eastern city—of the acclaim given the remarkable power and range of her voice—how she had been soloist in an oratorio presentation, and of her church and concert singing. Then after a few years the Weldons moved from Edmonton and no more was heard of the young songstress.

Twenty years later a citizen of the city—a city in truth, it had become—saw fit to take a 'trip around the world'. He brought back with him in his many accounts of travel, a strange story of his meeting a former Edmonton girl, while stopping in Paris. He went to dine at the Café de la Paix, which was a place that a friend had recommended to him as being 'the' place to go in Paris. After the taxi driver honked his way through the city traffic and brought him near the Place de l'Opéra on the Boulevard des Capucins where the famous restaurant stands, the man was sitting at a table, feeling rather alone with all that chattering of French about, when, to his surprise, a voice at his elbow spoke in his own blessed tongue:

"Aren't you Mr. McHaddon, the ferryman from Edmonton?"

Mr. McHaddon's surprise and pleasure was genuine—complete.

"Don't you remember Pauline Weldon? I used to sing in your church."

Yes,—he did remember, but he would never have recognized this beautiful and elegantly gowned lady so richly clad in rich furs and fine jewels, to be the Weldon girl of former days. She told him she didn't reside in Paris, was merely in the city rehearsing for the coming opera season. They lived, she said, for the most part, in the country, some miles from Paris, on her husband's estate. Afterwards, when Mr. McHaddon recovered from surprise, he realized that she had not given him her new name. He enquired of the premier garçon the name of the handsome, grey-haired foreigner, who had been her escort. The waiter's manner became lofty, "Ah! mais oui! you mean Mons. Le Comte Labelle? He comes here oft! Mme. La Comtesse, quelle cantatrice de talent! Une voix magnifique. Eet is, perhaps—you know hirr?"

Pauline! a *Countess*! Well, now, just fancy that! and the folks back in Edmonton said "I remember *her*. She used to fetch their cow every evening from the slough way back on Fifteenth Street." Another added, "Yes, I remember the Weldons, a Welsh family; and the girl—who sang—a kind of a big, good-natured girl, she was—not like the rest of the family at all."

It was generally supposed that she must be living a pretty 'high' life in all those foreign cities like Paris, the wife of a French count, singing and acting on a stage, and all that. Not for *her* would be a nice quiet home life with family and children like that of the girls she used to go around with in town. Like Betty, for example, who has a fine house on Victoria Avenue with a family of five—or is it six children the Charlie Burton's have?

Verily, in the words of the great Chief Maskepetoon a maiden's tears do salt the earth.

And the big white boat—the City of Edmonton? She never again sailed proudly up the river to Big Island, bedecked with flags on Dominion Day. On celebration days they put decorations on floats for the automobile parade. Some of the floats were even shaped like boats. Floats! they were the thing! For, one day a man ran the first automobile⁶ down Jasper and

everybody ran to the street to watch it go by. Pretty soon there were nearly forty automobiles in the city and people were taking to flying around the country in great style on Sundays and holidays. They went to Cooking Lake, Alberta Beach, the Country Club in just a matter of an hour or so. They drove twenty—twenty-five and even thirty miles an hour, and some (the reckless fools!) went *forty*.

There was a notable decrease in passengers on the big river boat after that memorable accident on Dominion Day. The owner felt the loss. More and more the boat was used for freighting purposes up and down the river. But it was built too large, cumbersome for that. The big boat often lay idle along the river bank. The crew of five found other jobs.

One day the engine parts were taken out and put in a smaller vessel for freighting purposes—much of the super-structure, too, went on the smaller boat. Doors and windows were used for building necessary garages on the hilltop above. Small boys used the hull for dressing rooms when doing that forbidden swimming in summer. On a later day that fine flooring on the upper deck was entirely removed. It was ripped up, piled on wagons, and taken to a farm⁷ south of town, where the farmer refitted it and built the narrow polished strips over a worn, wide-boarded floor. There was enough to cover the front room and the dining room and some left over. The farmer whistled away as he hammered, measured, sawed and dove-tailed each narrow strip of hardwood together. He kept on measuring, pounding, and fitting again—counted the number of boards on the big pile nearby. "Ida," he called aloud. "There's going to be enough to cover the kitchen, too!" His wife came to the doorway, her face glowing, and watched that shining golden expanse of floor, once the joy of countless dancing feet, grow inch by inch towards the kitchen. "Oh, Will," she breathed, hugging folded arms tightly against her lean waist. "Oh, Will!" was all she said.

There remained very little top on the old boat. Each year it battled the elements, was sheared down more. It became a

barge-like thing, firmly settled, grounded on the south bank of the river.

Now eloquently it speaks to those who pass it by in the late warmth of autumn days: "Yes, here I lie, on my back, a broken, twisted cadaverous thing, each year sinking deeper and deeper in the soft silty sands of the river bed. In spring, strong flood waters come upon me, not gently, and mighty ice chunks plunge against my jagged ribs, like wrath, breaking my body limb by limb, until nothing shall remain but those strouds of ravelled metal cable, coiled about a deeply buried anchor. And lying close beside is my huge rusted funnel too, that once towered so shiny black, glowed to the heat of my throbbing engine heart; and gave such comforting warmth to a forlorn girl, miserable, wet and cold, who knew but little, but had hoped for much. In fall, when low clear waters bring my shape in high relief, lusty youths pitch me with sticks and stones, to which I'm roused to but hollow answer—far too faint and feeble for their liking. Then, when locked in winter's ice, there come upon me from zooming airplanes in a brilliant sky above, darting small shadows, swift as time, that touch like quick caresses; while long rumbling trains draw trailing darks across my yawning outstretched form, as they move, powerfully and sure, atop a high bridge 'twixt me and the setting sun.

"So full well I know—my day is done, as I rest low on the river bed until that time when merged with the swift running river itself, I shall go buoyantly to the sea on those waters that once gave me joy and life!"



Chapter Sixteen

*Wherein One Inspired By a Great
Countryman, Tried Again*

"SO!" said the priest, his keen eyes appraising the ragged half-breed standing before him, "you wish to march in that parade¹ tomorrow!"

Jean Borgereau nodded rather sheepishly and shifted his slouched weight from one leg to the other.

"But, you cannot walk beside your brothers of the *Jean*

Baptiste Society in such shabby soiled attire! You must be respectably clad—make yourself *nettoyé*—” Father Leduc’s² voice had taken on the sharp emphasis of one reminding of an oft repeated rule. His thin wide mouth had become firmly set. With his long downward pointing nose and crafty bright eyes, the fat elderly priest was not unlike a wise old watchful fox sitting there.

“Fodder, I say for sure—and true—I haf no money—no money to buy me—.” The begging tones were here sharply interrupted: “What? Is it that you do not *work*—do not earn—?”

“Sure! I work, Fodder—I work hard—on the land—on André’s place near Villeneuve—he no *pay* me! Then, it rain ‘n’ rain—” the whining voice dragged on: “—‘n’ my shoulder—it pain—pain—‘n’ my leg too, bad, ver’ bad!” Jean’s features tightened in recollection of his sufferings; he dragged his hand down his side.

For a short moment it became very quiet in that cloistered room. A golden line of sunshine, escaping from the edge of a drawn window blind, slanted across the waiting room’s dim interior and fell upon the broken, outworn boots of the big Metis standing there. The gaze of the priest, seated at his desk, remained steadily upon Jean, seemingly seeing nothing or something far beyond his beggarly visitor. Perhaps he was seeing again the men of this man’s race—fifty—sixty years ago.

Suddenly he rose, scraping back his chair noisily. “Be seated, Jean,” he said, “wait here,” then he left the office by a door which opened upon a rear anteroom. When he reappeared he was holding a number of bank notes in his hand. These had the limp and flattened look of bills long pressed between leaves of a book. They were extended towards Jean. “I shall lend you this money, Jean. It is a fair sum—enough to purchase the proper habiliments you need. You can now march as proudly as any other behind our illustrious countryman.”

The half-breed’s great horny hands had reached out to grasp the bills but became for an instant stayed—plainly the man

was overcome with gratitude. He heard Father Leduc saying: "You understand Jean, you are to repay me this money? As soon as you have earned the amount?" A certain severity was in this.

"Yaiz—Yaiz! Sure, I pay back, Fodder—soon—next week—maybe tomorrow!" Jean was stammering in eagerness to acknowledge indebtedness.

"Ah, *tomorrow*? No, Jean—tomorrow you cannot—tomorrow you will attend the inauguration ceremonies and parade in company with the members of the Jean Baptiste Society"—here Father Leduc's voice became indulgent: "You will march and listen to that great man Laurier speak, is it not so?" During this speech he had produced pen and paper from a drawer of the desk and began writing under the date August 31st, 1905: "*I hereby promise to pay Father Henry Leduc the sum of twenty dollars within one year of date—*" "Now, Jean, sign this"—and the pen was offered to the breed. And fully expecting that an "X" mark would be placed where a signature was indicated, the priest was not a little surprised to see the pen carefully guided over letters spelling "Jean Borgereau". By dint of diligent practice under the tutelage of Tom Grant, Jean had learned to write his own name. Tom had wisely counselled him that knowing how to do this would be a safeguard against swindlers and land grabbers.

"Good," said the Father, blotting the sprawled characters, "now you had better be on your way—the day is going fast." He watched the shambling bent over figure hurrying away, money clutched in hand. "Mind now, you march tomorrow—clean, neat and *sober*!" Though this last word was only an added precaution, since the good Father had already made certain that Jean was duly interdicted.

Jean saw the elongated shadow that ran before him as he walked the road toward the east, where the business district of the widely scattered new city lay. The Father was right, the sun was well on its way down.

Jean hurried his pace anew.

Though only in his forties, the ravages of ill health and improper living had given the half-breed the appearance of age. Rheumatism, from which he had suffered since his trek North, where he narrowly missed drowning in icy waters, had stooped his shoulders and gnarled his hands. Thus his head, with its shock of unkempt black hair, was carried with a forward thrust from his great gaunt frame, giving him a menacing, gorilla-like look.

The roadway wound through a poplar copse and then opened suddenly upon the back yards of a row of newly erected wooden frame houses. There, a comely young housewife, hanging some washing on a line, saw the approaching Metis. She turned from the task at once, retreated to her kitchen and slammed the door shut in all possible haste.

Upon reaching Jasper Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the city, Jean saw that great archways had been erected at street intersections, from which innumerable small flags fluttered in the late summer breeze. The city was decked in birthday splendour to celebrate its becoming the provincial seat of legislature on the morrow. Already a distinguished entourage³ had made its arrival by train that afternoon. An air of expectancy hung over all. Shop windows were brightly decorated. The sign "Welcome" stood out everywhere. Jean the 'breed' was altogether pleased by the gaudy spectacle before him. He felt inclined to loiter on the street and was loath to leave place in front of big show windows wherein such fine merchandise—merchandise he now could *buy*—was so temptingly displayed.

All was not well, however. Amid the hurrying throng of late shoppers a uniformed man, a policeman, had appeared, who somehow was keeping himself just within sight. Policemen held unpleasant associations in Jean's mind. So he shuffled on—kept "moving on", as that august gentleman in blue uniform undoubtedly would have asked him to do, should he have tarried overly long.

Thus continuing on the street, he found himself at a later hour well beyond the busy shopping district—he had gone

past the "Queen's Hotel"—a place he knew, where, in fact, his younger sister, Madeleine, was employed as chamber maid. But now, right before his eyes, was something that caught his fancy. It was a shirt brilliantly checked in red and green. It hung with a motley collection of men's garments outside the doorway of a little drygoods store. Inside, the storeman was about to roll down the window shade when he saw Jean standing there fingering the shirt. He came without at once and began lifting down the hanging garments.

"Clawsing time," said the man, shifting the cigar stub in his mouth, "you come 'nodder time!" At once he spied the green-backs in the half-breed's hand and as quickly reversed decision: "Okay den, but you gotta mek ob ya min'—*fast*."

Though in spite of all the trader's urging, a full hour had passed before Jean emerged from the store with all his purchasing done. A strange and transformed Jean stood there. Under his arm he held the parcel containing his discarded clothing. The storeman had kicked the filthy stuff together on the floor, wrapped it all rather gingerly in a paper parcel and handed it, along with fifty cents in change, to his customer. "Now ya sure look dandy!" he said, and all but shoved Jean out of the door.

A little dazed from the bargaining bout, the half-breed walked away wondering at the strange feel of his fine new raiment. In place of his battered black felt hat a stiff straw "boater" was perched on the back of his head—his filthy tattered shirt was replaced by the red and green checked one he had admired, its thick woollen folds hanging heavily upon his emaciated form. New black corduroy pants now encased his legs and falling somewhat short in length, revealed the better those astonishing black and white shoes he wore. Of the store's meagre boot supply, these white oxfords trimmed with glossy black patent leather were the only ones that were large enough to accommodate Jean's tremendous feet. They would have delighted a dandy with their "razor edge" pointed tips and elaborate black embroidery trimming. Out on the

sidewalk, Jean noted that the sun had now come to the edge of the horizon. Warm and golden light bathed the world about. He crossed the street and that took him to the brow of the river bluff. Here he heaved his big bundle over the steep embankment. He hadn't wanted it anyway.

The parcel went bounding down—down—straight into the old "Vigilantes Depository" where once his shack had been. No longer were squatters' shacks nestling below. The city had cleared them away. Jean had found his own gone upon his return from the Klondyke trek—much to his dismay. He had sought out Muchias, still comfortably housed in his tiny shed on the south bank. Muchias had listened to Jean's story in silence and some sympathy and then advised him to find another place for a new shelter. He cautioned him to go "higher up" on the heavily wooded south bank—"Dig in the ground where they can't find you", Muchias had said. So Jean's present abode was now located on a bench half way up the riverbank towards the place known as "Garneau's Hill". It was well hidden from the old road leading down to the ferry by thick brush and trees. There was a spring—a mere trickle of water—nearby. Here Borgereau made his habitat as only a half-breed can. A high pitched roof was projected from the bank's sharp slope that was covered with odd bits of tar paper and oil tins hammered flat. The walls, supported by tree poles, were of mud—pieces of tarpaulin, and gunny sacking. Inside, the hard-packed earth floor had a covering of worn out linoleum found on the city's dump heap; where also had come some rusty stove piping protruding from the west wall. An empty metal oil drum below served as a stove—packing boxes sufficed for chair and table. With a sleeping bunk fashioned from tree poles this completed the necessary furnishings. Then Jean did a strange thing. He made a second bunk and placed it along the wall across from his own. This was for Tom Grant's use when he returned. For, though it was seven years since Jean had parted from Tom, Matty and others of the gold seeking party, he never gave up hope for Tom Grant's return. Surely, one so all wise, resourceful as he would not perish? In anti-

pation of this certain return, Jean often communicated thoughts aloud to the future occupant of that bunk across from him. Tom knew him well—it made Jean feel better telling Tom of his adversities, the injustices and slights received from many: André, who wouldn't pay him for hard, long labour done on his farm; Madeleine, who never answered his greeting on the street. Other times he boasted and cackled with glee at having unearthed someone's illegal liquor cached deep in the bush; again at having a big bottle of whiskey that Tony, the youngest of the Borgereaus, had procured for him—at a price. He could even speak of Miette, to Tom—in a whisper. And when rheumatic pains tore him he groaned horrible curses towards the bunk across, so awful that children⁴ from above "Garneau", who had ventured nearby his shack, would quake in fright. They thought him an ogre—only the bolder ones dared peep inside his door. Seeing them, Jean would rise up and growl fearfully. That made them scatter from sight like frightened mice. There would be an answer by way of a sharp sound from an earth clod or pebbles hurled at his stove pipe—shrieks of high pitched laughter—then, silence.

This time when Jean got home he would want to talk to the bunk and Tom again—to tell him of the money loaned him—the excitement of buying at the drygoods store and tomorrow's big parade. He stepped carefully and a little mincingly, the new shoes were beginning to hurt.

* * * * *

Heat lay upon the river valley the morning of the big celebration. While they had paraded on the streets above, people felt some relief from it in the light blowing breeze; but here in the low-lying river flat where the Exhibition grounds were, not a breath stirred to give respite from the sun's hot rays.

All had now reached the grounds below and were gathered about an open-air speaker's platform. This newly erected

wooden platform was built high and had been hung with bunting and flags. People began seating themselves on the many long rows of bleachers spread out in front of the stand.

The procession had been stupendous in its pomp and pageantry. With a background of spirited band music there came a long line of elegant carriages, footman attended, carrying gentlemen in formal attire, the sun glistening on their tall silk hats as they rode by; while their ladies, seated proudly beside, were clad in shimmering gowns, their delicately powdered faces barely visible above the fluffy feather stoles they wore. In the open phaetons, these ladies tilted their dainty, gay coloured sunshades jauntily across their shoulders and flirted them about—giving a further note of animation to the scene. Scarcely was it to be believed that many of these very people, twenty odd years ago, had trudged the long trail west, shoulder to wheel with their Red River carts.

Then came great decorated floats—an automobile—a Red River cart. Thousands of pedestrians, representing every local society, followed, as well as thousands of school-children⁶, marching four abreast, singing as they marched. The Dominion's Governor-General, Earl Grey, standing on the steps of a tall building overlooking McDougall Hill, viewed the procession on its way down the hillside road and was moved by the sight. *How proud was this city, once a fur fort, on this day!* His Excellency also reviewed the Royal North West Mounted Police after he and his party arrived at the park grounds below. The two hundred superbly mounted men, representing three squadrons of the force, in the scarlet jackets of their full dress uniform, made an imposing and brilliant spectacle.

It was time now for the speeches to begin. First came the Mayor's address of welcome which was graciously acknowledged by His Excellency in reply. Then precisely at noon hour the first Lieutenant Governor of the new Province of Alberta, was sworn into office and the Fortress North became a capital city while guns on the hill boomed forth a royal salute.

When the heavy reverberation had died away a brief hush

followed and then one arose upon the platform whom all had been awaiting to hear; the Dominion's Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

As the tall courtly figure of the famous statesman came forward to the front railing, a low murmur ran over the massed assemblage. Then instantly all became an intent quiet.

Above them they saw the commanding form of the minister—the noble head with its halo of white limned against a blue September sky. The great leader's wide sensitive lips were curved humorously as he peered down to the listening throng below. He looked long and searchingly, as though seeking there his own expression^o. "*When I look about me on this vast sea of upturned faces—*," he began, "*I see the determination of the new Province. I see everywhere hope. I see everywhere calm resolution, courage, enthusiasm to face all difficulties—*," the golden voice went on; weaving its magic over the hearts and minds of that great audience, making these respond and become as one.

All listened entranced and forgot their griefs, fears, political differences; their tragic poverty, gruelling toil and petty woes. For in the few deft strokes of a master, the orator had painted before their wondering eyes a picture of their future—their new Province and home as it would be in the time to come. The fair land of Canada was, in truth, the land of promise, with its great riches—its beauty—its fair government—and also like the Kingdom of Heaven, since "those who come to it at the eleventh hour are as much considered as those who come the first." And all that prosperity was *theirs*, to be a reality by their own will, endeavour and *unity of purpose*.

The description was given with gestures of grace—touches of rare humour, without a clumsy word or sign of bluster—all told with the compelling power of a profound conviction borne in a mind of wide vision, judgment and pity. It was an extraordinary performance, the skilled accomplishment of oratorical genius. It touched the high and lowly alike in its inspired message. Some, newly come to the west and lonely for homes afar, wept, in their emotion.

Still in a radiant daze, the half-breed, Jean, lumbered to his feet upon the last word of the great speech and strode away. Away from the noise and clamour of those senseless clapping hands that would go on forever in their foolish clapping—away from crowds of people—away from Clara, André's wife, with a bobbing big rose on her shiny straw hat, seated so near—yet pretending not to see him. He, too, had forgotten his fears, aches and grudges while listening to that voice with its speech which had the familiar accents of the holy priests. But now all former thoughts and feelings were rushing back upon him as he lunged ahead. He took a trail that edged along the river. The heat of the day had made his heavy new clothing unbearable—his feet were burning in the narrow new shoes. He stooped suddenly and tore them off savagely, walking in bare feet as he always wanted to walk in the warmth of summer. This way and with moccasins for winter, he could go on and on forever—away from too many people, pavement sidewalks, watching policemen and other persons like Clara Gibson—Clara, who married André, her hired man, when her old man died and thus condemned his young brother to unending labor thereafter. Jean could hear the click of the binder in his ears—and "Hurry John!" (it was always "*hurry John*" with Clara) to keep up with that hell of a binder—the "click" of machinery: "*click*" and bundles off—"click" again and more bundles off—lift and hurl—lift 'n' hurl 'til your goddamned back broke in two!

God! he wasn't going back to the farm! He was going away—going North—where the land was bare, sweet, open and free from binders. Where Tom was—where Tom,—wisely—had stayed. A fragment of those words came: "*All newcomers should be welcomed, for should land near you become filled, there are yet Canada's limitless miles to the North—with its riches of fur, fish and forest—*" So had this great countryman spoken, the man who Tom had said would have spared the life of Louis Riel had he been at the helm at that time. Riel—hero and friend of his father, Henri!

Jean found that his bare feet were treading the rough terrain once the Indian burying ground—where Henri Borgereau, too, had been buried during those stirring days of the rebellion. His grave with others had been moved to the St. Albert mission cemetery. The Indian grave yard was now but a memory. There had been no one to claim the Indians buried there—though many of their descendants could be numbered among the cheering multitudes left behind him: McDonalds, Frasers, Camerons, Bouchards, Cardinals; all who were proud of their Scotch or French ancestors but never that their grandmother was a Cree chief's daughter! Somewhere here they buried old Gibson's squaw-mother, who was Clara's grandmother.

Hate filled the half-breed's heart recalling that hard gaze under a modish hat with its single bright flower—the gaze which was so resolutely fixed beyond him.

The ground was littered here and there with broken pieces of weathered wood—the remains of little picket fences and grave marks. He lifted a small imbedded board that had a cord twisted about it. Beneath, he noted the clear impression of a small shell centred upon the board's depression in the ground. Jean found the shell still firmly fixed upon the underside of the board where it was held by its cord. He knew at once that this was Miette's shell—the one she had always worn below her rounded young throat. Removing its clay coating, the shell's pearly lustre became again visible. The man fingered it long and thoughtfully, then with a swift gesture, pressed it to his cheek. An agony of remorse and nostalgic longing came over him. Those days when he knew the proud strength of a youthful body—the smell of the bush camp's fresh-cut trees!

The dead girl's memento was borne with him as he went panting uphill, passing the decayed remnants of the old fort—just the long store houses and trade house stood there—windows gaping, the whole now in dilapidation and disuse. All about it the grounds had been shorn and mounded up in places for playing a white man's silly game⁷. The heat was awful—the thick woollen shirt galling upon his sweating back

—but this road he was taking was the right trail—the one that led *North*.

Presently he had rounded the top of the bluff and was standing at the door of the livery and feed stable where Tony worked. This old log stable was once the first stopping place for those who teamed from the North and bought their supplies at the traders, Norris and Carey, across the way.

Tony looked at his older brother, Jean, standing at the open door of the stable—wild eyed, bare-footed and an elegant black and white shoe protruding from each pocket of his pants.

“Bring da *boddle*!” said Jean to Tony, almost in a croak. Jean’s thirst was terrible.

“Hmmm,—’n’ ‘no mon-nay?’” Tony drawled mockingly.

“Bring down da *boddle*!” Jean repeated more threateningly.

Tony’s eye lit with live interest on those elegant shoes at Jean’s side.

“Gimme one,” he said, “I wanna try—,” he stooped to remove his old manure bespattered boot and then drew on the black and white one Jean handed him. His eyes sparkled with pleasure in admiring the effect. Tonight he was going to dance—the big celebration dance, with all the elite at the Thistle Rink. He wasn’t working tonight. *Ya bet not!* Tony was agile, debonair and handsome. He danced like a natural.

“Ged me da *boddle now!*” Jean advanced upon his young brother.

Tony turned without a word and walked towards the ladder which led to the hay loft above. He climbed up and disappeared through the opening to the loft.

Jean put on Tony’s discarded boot. It was amply wide and would do if he curled back his big toe a little.

Above, Tony took a quick glance around to his living quarters at the rear to make certain there was no one there to observe him, and then proceeded towards a certain spot under the mound of hay which filled the front part of the hay loft.

This loft had been his abode for some years now. It suited him—warm in winter, airy and cool in summer. He hadn’t

always fared so well. He was nine years old when father Henri had died and his widowed mother with the younger children had gone to live with Lena MacDonald, the married sister. The MacDonald farm was sixty miles from a town. None of them had liked it there.

Tony had run away, as had André and another older brother, Raoul.

Therese had been accepted as a teacher in an Indian Industrial school. Natale had died at the St. Albert infirmary—there was only Madeleine, himself and Jean in town. The family bothered him very little. Except Jean. But always there was *some* whiskey cached in the hay somewhere—if he, Tony, could find it. Now Tony dug deeply into the hay and brought forth a large bottle of the liquor.

When he got back below with it, the brothers exchanged bottle and the other shoe that was left in Jean's pocket, without a word. The older man raised the bottle to his lips at once and drank deeply—then sank down against the door jamb. He shoved the stiff "boater" farther back on his head and dropped his head in his hands.

"I'm goin' off," he muttered, "I'm seeck of all. I'm goin' Nord."

"North?" queried Tony, he now had both black and whites on his small feet and did a neat shuffle and tap dance on the stable floor—"Prudham outfit jus' lef'l"

And then another buggy drew up to the door and Tony went out to greet the driver.

This was Jean's chance. Holding the big bottle tightly to his side, he went outside—around to the shady side of the stable. There stood the last wagon of the Prudham "outfit". Two horses, harnessed in readiness to go, were tied to the back of the wagon where they munched hay from the box.

Again the breed saw his chance. With true Indian craftiness, Jean sidled between some bales of hay piled on the wagon and hid himself cunningly beneath some of the loosened hay.

When the teamster returned from lunch, he drove away without suspecting the stowaway who lay behind in the wagon

box. He was in a hurry to get away in order to overtake the other Prudham lumber wagons which had started an hour ahead of him on the three-day return trip to Lac la Biche.

Several hours later, when he had passed beyond St. Albert and was nearing the Villeneuve district, he heard a strangled cough which seemed to come from behind him. He had been singing lustily—as was his wont—over the clatter of his wagon, in great good spirits—he'd seen a parade, the day was fine—but this was the second time the sound of the horses' coughing had so oddly come from *behind*. He stopped his team, tied the lines and vaulted over the seat back to investigate.

By this time, Jean had raised up from his hiding. The dust and heat of the hay was fairly choking him. With greatest difficulty he was now trying to voice his explanations. The teamster was more angry than surprised: "Ya dumb bastard! Get out! I'm not taking the likes a *you* for a passenger!" He lifted the end-gate and shoved the hapless Jean onto the ground—kicked his straw hat out after.

So he was a "Borgereau", was he? Well! that farm wasn't far away? Let the old codger *walk it off*! A mighty tough customer, that one, said he, looking back at the half-breed on the road shaking a fist at him in his rage.

The sun had disappeared behind banked clouds. The darkened sky foretold a change in weather though the heat of the day remained with atmosphere sultry and stifling. Jean was tormented by it. He refreshed himself with another drink and tore at his shirt front. The new woollen shirt was irritating his flesh beyond endurance. This itching all over him was not the familiar kind, relieved by a quick rub at the spot, this stayed on and became only more aggravated by scratching. Goaded too far, the offending garment was stripped off and flung to the ground. That was better.

He kept on going—going on the "right" road—the same one he took in '98 with Tom. Yet another discomfort plagued him: those boots on his feet—Tony's no-good boots—they must be off too. They were hurting his toes unmercifully. A boot was

removed and hurled into the air with an oath—then another long drink taken and the march continued. A little way further the other boot came off. The ground was heaven beneath his feet! All was right now—he wanted nothing. He could hear the bottle at his side gurgling and gulping pleasantly with his stride. He shouted aloud in an exuberant joy.

On the distant horizon ahead he could see the line of trees which marked the driveway of the old Gibson farm—André's place. This time he wouldn't take the turn off the road there—by God, no!—he wouldn't! He was going straight on to the North—no one could stop him now!

He heard a rumble of thunder—looked skyward to find whence it came. The roadway before him moved upwards, too. The man wheeled from it to an opposite direction—and it settled back again. It came up again and he made it go back to place once more. But it would not stay there. Then suddenly it rose up and struck him in the face with so hard and vicious a blow that he could do no more. The liquor in the bottle leaped crazily at the impact and then it too, was still.

Later on, there mingled with that muttering of distant thunder the sound of an approaching wagon. This rumbled and lumbered along slowly and steadily in the manner of farm wagons drawn by work horses who know the plow. Two occupants on the springy seat in front were slumped down in the weariness of long travel. The woman's head drooped forward upon her breast. A single flower on her hat bobbed to the even rhythm of the horses' plodding gait. The man held the reins loosely and yawned widely now and again. They had got up at four that morning to make town early. At home there were still the chores to do—couldn't stay for the dance—goddamned chores to do—, he yawned again.

The horses shied a little because of a light object—a straw hat—that lay on the road. The driver tightened hold on the lines.

Pretty soon one of the horses veered inwards to avoid treading upon a big boot in his way. *What was eating the sons-o-*

bitches? Soon after, the other horse jumped at something, too. *What the hell was up?*

André Borgereau stopped his team and leaned out from his wagon seat to peer about. The light was dim now but he could see something on the roadside. There lay his brother, stretched out face downward upon the ground, sans shirt—sans shoes and a whiskey bottle protruding from his hip pocket.

Clara leaned over and she, too, saw Jean. She plucked her husband's sleeve as he was about to jump down: "Leave him be!" she hissed venomously, "he's no good for us! Just trouble—" Clara was thinking of the bed Jean had slept in at her place—left crawling with bed-bugs and fleas—now the whole room stank of the kerosene she'd doused upon it—visitors could smell it and it shamed her.

She seized one of the slack reins and slapped it smartly: "Giddyup," she cried, and André was thrown back upon the seat. "Lumber teams going into Edmonton can pick him up!" Clara told her husband, who did not say a word.

The sound of the wagon went further and further away into the distance. The thundering, too, gradually ceased. And with nightfall a gentle rain began to fall. It fell softly upon the dusty, parched fields of harvest time and it cooled the fevered body of the half-breed sprawled upon the road that leads to the North.



Chapter Seventeen

The Turning of The First Sod

ALICIA and her husband, the new professor, had "words" that morning just as he left the house. She told him he looked a "fright" in that suit with the trousers all out of press. "Why aren't you more mindful of such things?" she said, her tone quite contemptuous.

"Well, why aren't you more mindful to *press* them, then, if you're so particular?" he tossed back at her.

"Yes, *why*, indeed?" Alicia drawled in icy sarcasm, glancing significantly about the dishevelled dining room; at the table strewn with the breakfast dishes; the floor cluttered with toys; and the baby's pram that had been brought inside with muddy wheels.

Alicia went on tying the baby's bib and didn't look around again. Then the front door closed neatly, cutting short any further discourse, while the big, outside morning world took the husband and left Alicia thinking rather bitterly that *she* too, would like the privilege of walking right out from all this.

The baby, who was cutting teeth, had given them a bad night. It seemed to Alicia as though she had just begun to get some restful sleep, when that early morning hammering from a new building next door wakened them again. A row of new houses was going up across the street, too,—no respite from building noises all day, from eight in the morning.

She put the little one in his high chair. He was still fretful. Donnie, an older child of five, climbed into his chair that had a cushion on it to make it higher. He called to his mother for something as she went to the kitchen for their breakfast, but Alicia couldn't attend until she first had food prepared for the baby.

In the kitchen a heavy-faced young woman stood at the sink. She looked up sullenly as Alicia came in and then turned back attention to her potato peeling.

It was too early to be peeling the potatoes for lunch, Alicia thought, besides Sonya wasn't doing them properly—not washing the potatoes, first.

"Sonya," came her faintly exasperated voice above the baby's crying, "you should be tidying the living room instead of doing that."

Alicia poured the orange juice into two glasses and placed a kettle of rain water from a cistern on the range to heat for the baby's washing. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Sonya wiping her hands on her dark apron, looking sulkily aggrieved. The maid then picked up the broom and dustpan, walked slowly from the room.

"Oh, goodness! She's taking a *broom* into the living room again! I've told her more than once to use the carpet sweeper and dust mop in that room." But the young professor's wife held her tongue. "I must remember," she thought, "that Sonya never worked in a house before; hasn't ever cleaned anything, except, perhaps, a cowshed."

She put a little cream over a dish of hot-soaked arrowroot biscuit and carried it on a tray with the other things to the children at the breakfast table.

She noticed the breakfast tray was sticky to the touch, and the silver badly tarnished. "Oh, dear! I must clean and polish it thoroughly myself! I'll do it after I get baby bathed and his diapers washed," was Alicia's inward thought.

What a magnificent, gleaming array of silver was displayed at the president's "At Home" yesterday, and how efficiently the smartly-uniformed maid served the tea. "Nellie" had the noiseless, well-trained manners of the perfect maid.

Was Nellie good with children?

"Well, we haven't a family, you know—I doubt if Nellie has ever been in a household where there were children." The president's wife had said it kindly and quite truthfully.

"For that matter, we couldn't afford to pay the salary required for a girl like Nellie, anyway. It's all we can do to give Sonya her twenty dollars a month," went the mind of Alicia.

You got into the habit of thinking in terms of "what you could afford" now. "It's like signing yourself to everlasting poverty when entering the priesthood, this going into *teaching*," was Jack's facetious remark upon their graduation. She had considered his remark amusing then, in those carefree days of girlhood.

In those student days, with "exams" over, University life meant the thrill of the class year dance; the arrival of flowers or getting into a new frock for a dean's reception, a reception held at a palatial residence on a vast green lawn, with everyone handsomely frocked and wearing corsages of gardenias.

"Ally's wearing Jack's 'Phi Delt' pin now—he's sent her orchids for the dance ——. I suspected, all along ——."

Orchids, gardenias—receptions, and a fraternity pin worn near your heart. That had been University life then ——.

A particularly sharp and close hammering came upon their ears from the carpenters close by. The walls of the new dwelling were already darkening her room, being only a few feet distant from their house. With miles of open country around, why did they build houses so close?

Alicia's glance ran over her dark floor, so heavily varnished that it was as though coated with molasses. Thank goodness! They were having a new house of their own by spring.

"Donnie, you mustn't go in there to watch the builders. Just stay in this yard—it's dangerous—don't you hear the way that lumber is falling? Yes, I know, dear, but Cammey and Claudie are bigger, older boys than you—it's different for *them* ——."

A sudden crash came from the living room—the sound of breaking china.

"Oh, damnation!" wailed Alicia. She knew what it was. A beautifully decorated vase—a cherished piece—a wedding gift she had lovingly and carefully packed in her trunk three times; that had gone with them from California to Boston, from Harvard to McGill—then back west to Alberta, only to be brought to ruin by the stupid hand of the girl, Sonya.

Alicia went on feeding the baby, silent and tight-lipped. Donnie got down from his chair and ran to the living room.

He came back to his mother. "It's the vase, Mother." He said it in an awed undertone. "Sonya did it. She knocked it off with her broom, Mother. It wasn't my fault, was it, Mother? *Sonya did it.*"

Alicia groaned: "Oh, Donnie, go on with your breakfast and don't bother me. I *know* you didn't do it. I almost wish you *had*. It would be easier to bear." The mother drew her dressing gown closer about her, feeling cold suddenly and with it a slight nausea. That salty taste in her mouth, had it

significance? A chilling thought of dread came over her. She put down the baby's food dish and went to the kitchen for coffee. Little Stevie whimpered protestingly after her.

Drinking the hot coffee made her feel better. Donnie in the meantime tried to pacify Stevie. He took his nice big penny from a coverall pocket and waved it enticingly before his little brother's eyes. Stevie's baby hand grasped it away and clamped it at once between those sorely aching gums. It gave him relief and he became quieted.

Alicia, returning, was filled with horrified dismay. "Donnie—Donnie! How could you let baby have a filthy, dirty thing like that in his mouth!" She was almost tearful now —. "Yes, Donnie, but *wiping* doesn't help—it may have millions of germs on it"—all the while Alicia was scrubbing that germ-laden coin —. "Where on earth did you get it? It's a funny crooked-looking thing —."

"The *digger* man found it."

"The 'digger' man?"

"The one in our cellar—with horses."

"You mean you've been where they're excavating for our house?" Alicia's voice raised in severity. That place was several blocks away on the old Garneau homesite.

"Cammey and Claudie took me."

"Well, don't you go there again unless daddy or I take you!"—the coin was being energetically scoured; to be dipped in a sterilizing solution. Her stern admonishing tone checked further tales from Donnie about the finding of his penny, but his face was shining in glowing recollection of the scene; the four lordly beasts rushing down the incline of the excavation; their jerk to retardation as the scraper behind cut in, filled with heaping earth; then their straining rise to gain the top.

"Giddap! you bloody bastards!" the sweating driver had yelled. The lines were thrown over his shoulder. He dumped the earth, with one fling of the scraper handle. Then the

team pranced by, smartly breaking wind, as they circled about the cellar hole to be poised again for yet another plunge downwards.

On one round, the teamster heard a faint clink as a metal piece struck against his scraper. It was a coin. He raised it, appraised it briefly, and tossed it towards the knot of children standing by to watch. "Here, sonny! sompin' for ya," and Donnie had grasped it up and put it in the pocket of his coverall. Such a nice, big penny. He beamed upon the tough teamster.

Now Stevie had started crying afresh.

"He *wants* it again, Mother."

Alicia fished the coin out of the antiseptic solution with the sugar tongs and scrutinized it. "Why, it's not a regular penny at all, it's a piece of Hudson's Bay trade money. There, *there!* now you may have it again, Stevie."

It placated the child at once. Biting on it once—twice, and well satisfied, he raised it up high in his chubby hand towards his mother. "Thee?" he lisped out; and smiled at her—eyes bright through the swimming tears.

And Alicia saw—saw that look and smile of ineffable sweetness and love upon her. It brought a rush of overwhelming warmth to her heart that was near to pain.

"Oh! you blessed angel!"

She hugged Stevie close. "Bite that penny all you want, darling—get those teeth through!" She carried him to the warm kitchen for his bath.

Yet another breakage was to happen that morning. This time in the dining room. A glass of milk Sonya took in to Donnie had somehow been tipped over and had spilled to the floor.

This time Alicia gave out a little yip of laughter. Donnie did gasp *so* comically as the cool milk ran down over his warm belly. Somehow nothing else mattered now except that Stevie's tender little body was in her arms.

As Donnie's sopping coveralls were being removed he probed his mother's mind thoroughly.

"Who spilled the milk, Mother? Was it my fault? Did Sonya do it, Mother? Was it Sonya's fault? Whose *fault* was it ——?"

"But, Donnie, mightn't it have been the *milk's*? It's such spilly stuff!"

Donnie saw that his mother was in *that* mood; being very serious and yet not serious, like when she read him of Little Black Sambo and the Pancakes or Bumper Rabbit.

Donnie's big questioning eyes went gradually narrower in a secret little smile of appreciative understanding.

Alicia's fingers fairly flew over the tasks of the morning; she had promised to play the University dedication service promptly at three o'clock and must be ready.

* * * * *

Muchias, the dwarf, closed the tiny door of his house and locked it. He always locked it now, because of marauding children, whose insatiable curiosity over him and his dwelling he found troublesome.

The little house was a gift from the river. When the flood waters of '97 receded they left the chicken house of some upstream farmer perched precariously across a lower bench of the river embankment, where it remained for the summer months.

It lay conveniently near John Walter's house and lumber mill, where Muchias worked. That fall it was dragged up the bank, straightened, floored and whitewashed within and without. It became the home of Muchias, where chairs, table and bed were all built to fit his small person. He was now an independent citizen in his own right, with a place of his own.

Golden yellow leaves rustled dryly beneath his feet, as he wended his way up to Garneau's hill that glowing October morning. The air was hazy and soft. It would be warm by afternoon.

Muchias was on his way to a special ceremony to be held on the hilltop—the ceremony itself was not of particular interest—that breaking of first sod for the University; his interest was chiefly in seeing and cranking the big red automobile of the Premier.

Muchias climbed the steady sweeping rise of the wooded trail, hoping he would have another chance this morning. He felt an honest glow of pride in remembering what the Premier (the Premier of the *Province of Alberta*, they called him) had said about that first time:

"He's the best man for that job, he doesn't need to stoop!" And the big, impressive man had chuckled with amusement while watching the short, powerful arms spin the crank handle around. This took place after a funeral service in the Baptist Church.

Muchias never missed a church funeral. He sensed the real importance of them. Birth and death were to Muchias of prime importance in life—what occurred in between, secondary. He gave a modest contribution to each of the twenty-two churches in the city. This, he felt, entitled him the privilege of attending all funerals.

A by-path on the trail upward turned off sharply to the right. Muchias decided not to stop this time with Jean—it might make him late for the cranking.

Besides, Jean was nearly always disgruntled and complaining. Since he had come back from the North he suffered much from rheumatism—he hated work; he hated the notices from civic authorities that told him to move; he hated the children who pestered him at his shack; in fact, he hated everything and everyone.

"I'm agoin' to leave this damned place—soon," he would snarl in his fits of pained irritation, "go back Nord—find Tom, he's tha on'y good fella alive." This Muchias took for ravings—since no one had heard from Tom Grant for nigh on to a decade. If he still lived it would be a miracle. So Muchias discreetly avoided the path that led to Jean's shack as he climbed up the hill.

Arriving at the top and puffing from the climb (Muchias always found climbing hills an effort), he saw that Larry Garneau's cabin had been razed; a cellar was already dug there, with foundation for a new residence. He walked on: the old trail through the bush was broken here and there by a fenced lot enclosing a new house. He kept walking due west to find the place where the ceremony would be.

Presently, after going through more dense brush, he came upon an open clearing. Here was the site of the new University. A gathering of people; a few driving rigs were there. There was a wagon, too, and from it men were lifting a plow. They began hitching horses to it—doing it slowly—as though in an uncertainty of intention. An air of waiting expectation hung over all; an attitude in which the dwarf readily partook—the Premier wasn't there, with his red automobile—not yet.

More people came—"business" men from the city—nattily dressed—smoking cigars—offhand, nonchalant, even disdainful in demeanour—Muchias heard them: "*University!—haugh, here in the sticks!—too soon—ye—es much too soon—it'll take years yet—who's a-going to settle down 'n' study out here—do they think? Grab profits—make your pile 'n' get out quick—that's the spirit out here —.*"

"Yeah, 'n' they're building a lotta houses for their 'profs' along the river there on the old half-breed's hill—Garneau's Hill. It'll be 'highbrow hill' instead a' 'half-breed hill' from now on, ha! ha-a —!"

—Full of amused scorn, were they. And further on, another group of men—more modestly attired—quieter of voice; but each word expressing an inner urgent thought: "— Yes, clearly those colours are indicated, we see them right before us, the green of that spruce with the gold of poplar and birch intermingled—my wife remarked it, as we drove across the bridge yesterday. The wooded banks are rarely beautiful just now —."

— "Yes, and there is an appropriate symbolism in the chosen colours¹ too; green for hope; gold for light and learning —," said another.

Suddenly the squawking of an automobile horn burst from the direction of the trail; drivers at once took places at their horses' heads, holding bridles with a firm hand; the great splendid car of the Premier was about to appear. And then it came, thundering out of the bushes like a red fiery dragon with two fiercely protruding brass-lidded eyes.

The chauffeur brought the big vehicle to a roaring standstill before the crowd, its sumptuous leather upholstery and elegant brass trimmings gleaming brightly in the autumn sun.

Six august gentlemen alighted—tall hats, morning suits, shining black leather shoes.

A short speech, a longer speech, a hymn—a prayer and then the Premier to the plow.

He removes his hat—his coat, and tosses the horse reins across his shoulder as he grasps the handles of the plow. In his youth he has plowed many a furrow in Ontario's soil, but this is his first in the prairie west. The horses stride ahead with a tossing and nodding of heads—the rich black sod is turned. There is a spatter of applause.

The first ground of that new University was broken.

Muchias waited for the end of the service. The six men were once more seated in the wide, red leather-lined tonneau. Muchias ambled close to the crank handle in front. It wasn't there! This time the chauffeur was not alighting from his seat. He looked just a mite smug, sitting up there in the high car seat.

Then a whirring, whining sound issued from the innards of the red monster. It got louder and louder until the motor was shaken in terrified agreement. A raucous blast sounded in their ears and the Premier's car was again in motion, lumbering proudly over the uneven turf of that new college campus.

All dispersed, chatting happily over the event. Muchias walked down the hill road, saddened.

He had been tricked out of a job for which he alone was best suited, by a modern invention.

Donnie stood in their arid back yard and fingered the penny in his pocket dolefully. He was lonely. On the front verandah Stevie was sleeping. His mother had gone. Only Sonya was in the house.

Over the building sounds next door he could hear the shrill, screeching voices of Claudie and Cammey, the twins. He went closer to the house, as close as he could, without getting off the yard. That brought him directly under a corner scaffolding. A man atop was nailing on siding, and Donnie was able to pick up some nails he dropped.

Pretty soon the twins appeared; emerging from the back opening of the building. They came towards Donnie.

"Thstill gotha penny?" (Both had a broad lisp).

Donnie drew it from his pocket, eyes upon the two bigger boys with all the whole-hearted admiration of five towards ten.

Cammey took it.

"'S'th no good."

"—No King er Queen; just blinketty old Hudthor Bay thighn!" (Just blinketty old Hudson's Bay sign). It was passed back.

"Lethsth go!" from Claudie.

"Can I go too?" pleaded Donnie.

"No, I thould thay not!—we're going to thearch for fothilth," answered one loftily, "great big monthter dinathorth' boneth!"
Monster bones!

"C'mon, hurry up." It was Cammey addressing Claudie, but Donnie heard it as a command. He followed them, running a little to keep up with their longer stride.

The twins decided to conduct their search for fossilized bones on the river bank close to the place of tremendous bridge-building² operations, where milled a turmoil of men and machines. The hunt opened with the twins gathering pebble stones and flinging them far out into the water, perilously close to some high curbing. One struck a glancing blow on the boards and bounded saucily. Others followed, now quite directly aimed and evoking more telling sound effect.

Donnie ran to where he could look far down to men working in a gigantic walled pit. He beheld the tremendously noisy spectacle of moving cables, grinding gravel, elevators and flowing concrete. His heart was beating high with pleasurable excitement, he wasn't afraid; he felt strong and proud and free. No one needed to hold his hand.

A big burly-chested man in high knee boots shouted:

"Hey, what the devil are you kids up ta, anyway?"

Claudie screamed back:

"We're juth hunting dinothaur fothilth, thath all!"

"Well, getha hell oudda here—quick! This is no place for kids."

The boys were about ready to move on anyway. They went along the rough river shoreline to another bridge that they could walk across, unhindered.

On the north side of the river they found more building activity. House and street construction with high mounds of excavated clay from cellars and sewers, stood about everywhere.

Solid rows of new houses, exactly alike, belonging to "Haney, Bell and McManus, Realtors"; or some of another type, by "Gordon, Crockett and Fraser"; lined the streets on either side. Occasionally an odd house of totally different architecture would rear its head between them, that was neither of "Haney, Bell and McManus" nor "Gordon, Crockett and Fraser" design. It stood, staunchly revealing its irregular dormers and unpredictable porches and windows, to show that individual enterprise, too, will have a say.

As the children continued on towards the city's business district, little Donnie kept closer to the bigger boys whom he followed. The noise of the traffic on Jasper Avenue made him uneasy. Right then he would gladly have taken his mother's guiding hand had it been offered. The whole street was in an upheaval, with the construction of trolley car³ tracks, which necessitated the driving of teams and trucks uncomfortably close to pedestrians on the sidewalks. Donnie jerked Cammey's sleeve suddenly. "I want to go home," he begged.

Cammey and Claudie showed scant sympathy—perhaps they weren't tired themselves. They upbraided their younger companion. "Little thrimpts like you shouldn't ha' come along—you should thtay at home where you belong!"

Then Claudie conceived a bright idea. A sturdy low-wheeled truck behind a team of heavy percherons stood at the street curb. It was loaded with beer kegs bearing the name of a brewery that stood on the south bank of the river. "C'mon, leth ridel!" he said.

The twins boosted Donnie on the back of the truck. The three sat on the beer kegs, dangled their legs and waited.

When the driver came back to his truck he threw the iron weight that anchored his lines in back and saw them.

He spat, wiped his mouth, and jumped up to his seat.

"You keetz cumin along?"

"Yethereel!"

"Hol' on tight, den!"

The sturdy white horses started on and Donnie held as tight as he could to his keg.

And while Donnie was thus being brought homewards, his mother, attending the University dedication⁴ service, sat at the console of a small organ. In the overhead mirror she could see the academic procession approaching, marching slowly in double line towards the elevated platform.

Men, solemn faced—black robed—wearing odd garniture of bright coloured silks over the shoulder . . . the reds of Harvard and McGill, the blues of Oxford, Toronto and Cambridge, and meeting today to dedicate a new University with colours of green and gold.

The hush of the invocation—the prayer:

"Almighty God, the eternal wisdom, we beseech Thee with Thy gracious favour to behold this new University and bless it; and grant that all its teachers and students may learn to know and follow 'Whatsoever things are true,' the motto of this institution; so that from them the light of truth may shine with ever growing brightness —."

And Alicia, with hands clasped, prayed too: "O help me to see and know that *light of truth*—truth that will set me free from the pettiness—the material things of life, and help me to teach our boys—our little sons—this rightful way of truth—(oh, I hope that Sonya hasn't forgotten about Donnie!)—keep them safe, oh, keep them from being *sick*, dear Lord, please! And if I am to have another child—help me—help me to be glad, to be strong, help me to bear and forget the constant care, the wakeful nights, the stench of diapers—one sees the freer life of the childless—those in high positions and of this institution—childless—wifeless too—could it be that I, bearing children, am a *hindrance* to the man I wish to help? Oh, dear, kind, understanding God, 'whatsoever things *are true*'? —."

The prayer for the new provincial seat of learning went on: "*for the University, like the church, has the one formula for freedom, that formula which we tend to forget in an age of materialism; O Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, be pleased to shed forth Thy divine wisdom upon us—to teach us to know that liberty arises not from political action nor economic action, but from a condition of the human heart —.*"

"The human heart—the human heart"—echoed Alicia in her own prayer to God.

"— *That we may come into the perfect knowledge of Thee, Whom to know is life everlasting. Amen.*"

The prayer ended, Alicia unclenched her hands—moved them to the keyboard before her for the closing anthem.



Donnie was again safely home when his mother and father returned from the *conversazione* which followed the dedication service. He ran from the yard to meet them in an exuberance at seeing his parents, and grasped his mother's hand, swinging

it hard. Alicia felt the glow of a mother upon seeing her children again following an absence. Stevie was dewy-eyed from his long nap of the afternoon. The house was tidy too. "*Everything*," Alicia decided, "*is better after five o'clock in the afternoon.*"

"Donnie," she called, "show that coin you have to Daddy." Donnie felt in his pocket, stopped—remembered. "I—I—haven't got it anymore —." He was crestfallen.

He had given it to 'old Johnny' at whose shack the boys had made a last stop on their walk from the hillside brewery. 'Old Johnny' was the big old Indian who lived all by himself below the hill. He had a pink shell that Cammey and Claudie wanted. They called it a "brackapod billy thella" (Billingsella) and they wanted to take it away with them. Old Johnny didn't let them, but would give it to Don for the penny. Jean Borgereau had at once recognized Donnie's penny as being Miette's old beaver coin by its peculiarly damaged mark. He thought it might bring him luck that her shell piece, picked up in the graveyard, had failed to give him. Perhaps the little pink shell was putting a curse upon him what with the pain he suffered in his shoulders and legs ever since he trekked the north wastes to get gold. So the twins got their coveted shell after all and bore it off in triumph, the while arguing heatedly between themselves over its proper zoological classification. They finally agreed upon taking it to their father at the University for scrutiny and an authoritative verdict. After that Donnie was to have it, *all to himself*. (Indeed, it was foreordained that in Donnie's hand the shell would one day find its way back to the far northern shores from whence it had come.)

Alicia saw the disappointment in her small son's face because he no longer had his penny.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, dear, *at all*. I just thought Daddy might be interested in it. You didn't go to our house building again?"

"No—no—I didn't."

And in truth he hadn't. Alicia felt that Sonya was doing better—showing more sense of responsibility over the children.

Just then the girl appeared in the doorway. "What for supper?"

"Oh yes! to be sure—food again." Alicia pondered briefly—and then: "I know! We've got maple syrup—let's have *pancakes!*"

It was said in a mood of positive abandon.

"Ye-es, let's!" Donnie made a little jump on both feet as he said it, for emphasis.

Alicia ran upstairs to change from street attire—singing as she went.

Sonya's pancakes were a genuine culinary success—they were brought to the family table hot and temptingly brown.

"A—ah," breathed the professor in appreciative anticipation; his hand reaching to serve them.

"—*Grace*, dear," reminded his wife, with dignity. The hand was stayed over the heaped and steaming plate of cakes, as the husband, an accomplished Latin scholar, intoned fervently: "*Fac Deus Noster ut hoc cibo refecti quaecumque vera⁵ constantius sequamur, secundum Jesu Christi spiritum—Amen.*"

And Donnie's eyes grew round in greatly amused wonder at those strange babbling words of his father.

* * * * *

The grace offered for that pancake meal so delighted and intrigued Donnie's curiosity that he wanted to hear it again—even before suppers without pancakes. Listening to his father's droning tones repeating this Latin grace, his childish mind would conjure up all manner of things. Once the 'funny words' were being spoken by a wild redskin over a repast of live snakes, coiled happily quiescent upon a plate on the supper table.

Donnie learned that the prayer said no word in praise of pancakes, however tasty they might be, which was the least

bit disappointing, inasmuch as this form of grace, for him, was always to be so strongly associated with them. He would follow the syllables one by one, as he heard his father recite them: *Fac—De—us—nos—ter —*.

He decided to learn them all, and one Sunday when he was given the special privilege of bestowing the grace at dinner before guests, he quite astonished his mother by repeating the entire Latin prayer with only a loss of one or two syllables. The guests were quite impressed. After all—a boy of *eight*! "That young Donnie," they said afterwards, "is certainly a clever one, and going to follow right in his father's footsteps."

They were wrong in that assumption. He did not. Both Donnie and his little brother, Stevie, growing in childhood, concerned themselves little with Latin or anything else but noisily moving cars, engines and trucks, all of which were made to suffer constant collision or equally disastrous mishap on the dining room rug. They were much absorbed in machines—machines that struggled and chugged—and chugged and chugged with terrific groaning power.

Then one summer day they were sitting with their mother in a crowded grand stand on the Exhibition Grounds⁶ when they saw that greatest of all noise making machines rise high into the skies and glide away on its double set of wings. After that not only the dining room rug, but the boys' own room, and even the basement, was cluttered with pieces of paper, cloth, match sticks and great quantities of string, all vicariously glued together to bring about some object that would fly.

Alicia, busy with baby "Joanie," watched them from her kitchen window; her boys who were always running now, and running fast, holding up their little airplane kites. It became plain to Alicia that the boys were going to be engineers when they grew up and would want to fly. They took to drawing planes, too, with amazing accuracy and precision for their years. Countless numbers of planes filled their drawing books—drawing books with pretty landscapes, fruit and flowers already well outlined there for the colouring. Once the pro-

fessor decided to draw one, too—the sons looked on in real interest. The father felt he had drawn a pretty fair plane. "Look, Stevel!" Donnie nudged his brother, "he's made a nose like a Wright and tail and wings like 'Jenny 4!'" "Haw—haw—hee—hee—I!" the boys laughed—long and loud.

"You and I, dear," said Alicia laying her cheek upon her husband's head, "are just old fogies, aren't we?"

* * * * *

Many strange things happened in the following years—so many and so strange that little boys' eyes scarcely widened any more in wonderment.

The professor and his family came out from a downtown moving picture theatre one summer evening. There were great crowds upon the street standing thick and deep about a place where news flashes were being posted on a bulletin board. Some persons were standing upon open-seated cars in their eagerness to read these bulletins. A shout would go up as each succeeding dispatch was tacked upon that board. Stevie, who was just six and a little groggy from his sleep in the theatre, didn't know what this was about, but he heard his mother saying anxiously:

"War? War in this enlightened age? Oh, surely not—it can't be! It simply *can't* be!"

But war *did* come upon the world in that 'enlightened' age. Donnie secretly longed to be older so he could be a soldier, too. He dreamed of flying in his own airplane high above the deadly enemy and routing them with one great powerful shot.

At Red Cross depots grim-lipped women sewed and knitted at a fevered pace. Mrs. 'Mac,' the banker's wife, was always there. She worked even harder than the others—felt she *should*, because her only child was a daughter, who couldn't go to war. Merle was a graceful tall girl of fifteen—blonde and handsome like her father. "But if she were a boy," Birdie said inwardly,

"I know she would want to go, too." Mrs. 'Mac' made her sacrifice to war in a different way. Towards the close of the fourth year of hostilities, she and her husband nursed the sick when the epidemic of influenza became so alarmingly prevalent all over the country. The big McConnell residence was filled with sick beds. Merle helped, too, in nursing the patients, along with professional nurses. The new University halls were also used for extra hospital space. Mr. McConnell, who had often relieved the night nursing, fell ill himself with the disease. That October, near the close of the war, he died.

Birdie, his wife, lived on to see a second great war. This time its coming did not surprise people greatly. They had been telling each other for some time that the way things were in the world, war was bound to come. And it did.

So there came a day when the widowed Birdie McConnell sat in an automobile at the city's airport⁷ and watched plane after plane rise from the wide runways. It was an impressive sight. There were many young men about the Airport building—nearly all wearing some type of war service uniform. And there were young women, too, in the well-tailored uniforms of soldiers. They stood proudly erect, clear-eyed and calm, awaiting transport to some distant port.

Seated in the tonneau beside her was Birdie's daughter, Merle. Usually admirably poised, Merle now appeared distraught. Her eyes searched the airfield before her, while one hand was clutched nervously upon the fox fur at her throat. Suddenly she straightened and sat forward. "There he is—that's his plane now—over there! See him climbing in?" Her husband, seated in front, eagerly followed her pointing finger. The young man was their son—Birdie's favoured grandson. The three in the car observed the debonair young flyer duck into the plane—saw the door close. Then the plane began to taxi away and make its lift off the runway. Merle sank back with a heavy sigh. "Let's go now—all this noise and Bert's going is upsetting. I don't want it to get me down, or think of the danger —."

"Danger?" said Merle's husband—he wanted to reassure her and himself: "Why, he's as safe, if not safer, up there in that

plane as we are down here in this car—with a lot of damned lunatic drivers around.” Here he swerved sharply to the right to give space to a passing car that sped by.

“Yes,” added Birdie, giving her daughter’s arm an affectionate squeeze, “you’re right, he’s as safe up there as we are down here—safer perhaps—*perhaps* ——?”



Chapter Eighteen

Airplane Flights and a World Air Centre

THE snow continued to fall in heavy soft flakes, piling higher and higher on the sloping, weighted branches of the fir trees. Beneath them a strange burrowing creature crept, struggled in its burying white softness. There were footprints that broke a trail ahead. Hands groped, felt for those deep impressions, dug in, dragged its body forward; then groped, felt and grasped once more.

The man felt snow everywhere—in his eyes—in his ears—his nose and mouth, too, at every indrawn gasping breath—and it felt warm—warm! Each time he reached and dragged his weight ahead, it humped about him in big heaped-up smothers of white—like foam in water, and he—Bert—was swimming in it—was swimming in *snow*! In just that way he struck out with his arms, shoved—kicked with his leg, and trailed that other, the left one—where was awful pain—pain so sharp it wakened him from deep sleep to a dream like consciousness.

For a while the figure lay still—flattened in the snow—then slowly, painfully, propelled itself onwards.

Odd fantastic shapes came before the young man's eyes, elves and sprites danced giddily before him; a dazzling fairy queen wafted a shining wand—he was in a childhood fairyland and intermingled was an ogre; that grotesque crumpled shape of the plane, upended¹ on a wing, pressed between trees, its door gaping wide, showing dangling, misshapen figures of men—his comrades—inside.

He wailed out with all his strength: "Bob!—Bob!—George!"

Couldn't they hear? Dragging himself nearer he found the gaping door of the plane much too high to reach—*he could not rise to his knees!*

His effort racked him; for a while everything went black. When he came to, he noticed there were footprints not far away, so big and deep that the fresh snow hadn't filled them. They led away between the trees—he *must* get to that one who had walked—could stand upright—for help. "Help! Bob! Help George!" he kept saying to himself over and over—with each gasp of breath, every upward fling of his arms.

Again the body sagged—was stilled for a while. Soft falling snow filled the creviced folds of the parka on the inert form. Then once more the man moved ahead; his progress becoming slower with limb motions more feeble, more mechanical, at every stroke.

The sky cleared a little, pale sunlight found its way through the thick growth of timber. It fell across the path where the

stricken one lay. Bert was roused a little: he thought he could hear the 'dah-dit, da-ah-dit' of the beam director—they hadn't heard it for so long—so long—*That radio!* It had failed! The fog, though, was lifting—lifting softly—softly. His hand reached out weakly, falteringly—touched something that felt firm and alive. Straining in an effort to look up he saw a man bending over him, a strange gnomelike creature, bundled, bearded and befrosted to the eyes: "King Winter!" simpered Bert, and his head dropped again into the blanketing snow.

* * * * *

At first he saw nothing in the dim cabin but the glow from a round-bellied stove that stood at a little distance from where he lay. The stove was legless and squatted in sand. The pain was gone from his leg. A benumbing weakness came upon him and he shut his eyes. The pallet of blankets and hides that were beneath and around him stank of smoked wood—burnt hide. That stench was strong in the cabin room. After a while the man's eyelids fluttered and opened.

Lying on his pallet Bert began to make out the objects around him one by one; a bunk with a bookshelf above; a table with a tin water pail atop; a rude arm chair, skin covered—lamp and lantern—some dark crumpled garments hanging on the wall.

From without came the sound of wood chopping; "chaugh—chaugh—chaugh, CHAUGH!"

Once there came a sudden bang as a flying piece hit the wall beside him. The jarring noise cleared the injured man's senses. His fingers slid down to his left leg that now felt numb—splints were there—bound on with shagginappi—one of them was a broom, its brush end lay under his foot, which was bandaged firmly upright.

With a wrench that was well nigh painful, Bert brought his mind back and remembered: a storm that struck them just

before reaching Whitehorse, the radio going out completely, fearful anxiousness at being lost—a hell-splitting crash—oblivion. Afterwards, crawling in the snow—*that was the old bushman out there chopping!* He should call him!—tell him. it was too much. He gave up, slipped back again into blessed unconsciousness.

On next opening his eyes he found that he was lying on the bunk. *He had been moved.* Outside were men's voices: "Sleds 're loaded up—we're pushing off—brought up these rations," in the assured crisp tones of an official.

"I'll need them. My supplies are about done."

The answer in a slow, deep voice with a surprising scholarly accent.

"You've done well by him, Mister. That fellow was damned lucky! If you hadn't dragged him in'n thawed him out, he'd a' bin as stiff as those bodies on the sled."

"Bodies! George and Bob! Stiff? *Dead?*"

"They'd never've found that plane—can't be seen fifty feet above! 'N—by God, you *walking* the trail in this snow to Indian Joe's!"

"I'd have done as much for a dog—found the fellow on my trap line."

"Well, just the same, he can thank *you* for being alive—and say, man, you should have a dog or two—your legs are getting too old to go nine miles to get to the nearest living soul in this deep snow —."

"Since my partner went away, and my last dog died, Indian Joe comes after my catch every spring."

"Uh—huh—yea—and brings along flour, matches and tea, I suppose?—and maybe a little something in a bottle, too? Hanh, it beats me! Why, you're living more '*Indian*' than any Indian now. Some of 'em even have radios. Cracky, some day Joe'll come into our barracks and tell us he's missed seeing you, 'n then it'll be up to us boys to come 'way out to this God-forsaken neck of the woods and prove '*natural causes!*' For God's sake, man —" The voice mellowed, became more

intimate, almost affectionate: "When ya *do* sluff off, make it summer time—the good old summer time, no snow 'n' light enough to find your old carcass!"—and both chuckled dryly at this bit of ribaldry.

"Well, s'long—be back for your man as soon as we can make it," and he strode away, a splendid figure in polished leather, glistening fur and fine-fitting uniform. The young police officer had made magnificent contrast to the older man's slight and shabby person.

Then, just as Bert had hoped, the door swung open and his "King Winter" man came inside the cabin. This time he stood upright; taller, and there was only a little hoar frost on his beard, so something of his face and features were visible. He walked toward the bunk, peered down, straining to regain vision after the sudden transition to the dim, indoor light. Bert met a searching look from a pair of keen grey eyes with brows lifted in question. Then a pleased, humorous smile overwent the bearded face on seeing him awake. "Stay quiet a while—you're all right." It was a voice Bert liked at once. It gave him instant feeling that all was well. He was grateful for the sensible restraint which forbade the old gentleman to engage him at once in speech. He watched the man going about the room in his quiet, steady manner; doing needful homely tasks; putting water on to boil, bringing in wood, fueling the stove, preparing food. Bert lay—relaxed in mind—then after a while found he could use his voice once more without undue effort.

With his first questions satisfied, the young co-pilot resolutely tried to turn his mind from the grievous shock of the crash and dwell only upon things immediately present. It was restful lying in the quiet cabin. He drowsed, slept hours upon end. Sometimes when he awoke he was alone, with his rescuer away, covering a trap line.

It was strange being in these surroundings and with the occupant of this cabin in the bush. "I'll find out more from him when the old boy comes back," Bert told himself, and

sank again in healing slumber. He learned later they were only forty-five miles from Watson Lake—a short distance by air, though actually a great distance by dog team over the snow-drifted gullies of the timber trail. And the old trapper had *lived* here since gold-rush days—and still believed that gold was to be found in these parts, although he had found it only in the trapping of furs.

The trapping—the daily trap-line trip, seemed to be the man's sole interest in life—indeed, what else had he? Formerly he had read, he had books—good books—but he didn't read any more—his eyes could no longer decipher book print.

The next day, when waking and finding himself alone, Bert glanced at the books on the shelf above the bunk. He was feeling brighter and stronger. *Can I read, I wonder?* All the books were yellowed with age, water-stained. He reached for one, opened it. It was Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." Written on the fly leaf in careful script was: "To John, with greetings on the occasion of his birthday, from his loving wife, Elspeth, April 5th, 1859." Bert gave a faint whistle over the wifely birthday gift as of 1859. He took down another, Plato's "Republic" and Paley's "Evidences of Christianity." There was a volume of Shakespeare's plays, too, and a treatise on botany, another on natural history. All these bore the name of "Tomison William Grant" and had the bookseller's imprint "Blackwell's Bookshop, Oxford."

So, the man had been in Oxford, had a leaning towards the study of the humanities—botany!

When the trapper came back and their meal was over, Bert asked him if he were the 'Tomison William Grant,' the name written in the books.

Tom came out of his brooding silence, nodded, and spat with fine deliberation and nicety into the yawning stove—waited until the sizzle died down, then added: "They call me 'Timber Tom.'"

"A nick-name?"

"A nick-name."

"Were you a student at Oxford?"

"Yes, I was reading for responsions there when I was a young lad."

"Why did you come here, to Canada?"

"A friend at Oxford, a theologian, urged me—also, to find fortune—gold."

All his answers were thus: brief, in three or four words, as though reluctant to be torn from reverie.

"Didn't you want to continue study at Oxford?"

"I lacked the means."

"Then you never found your fortune in gold?"

"No, never enough to take me back."

Bert looked around at the mean furnishings of the cabin, at the brooding man, who had toiled, striven to acquire the necessary for a University education, and failed—then thought upon the ease and casualness with which he had been granted a University education. The University was close to his home in Edmonton, where a variety of courses was offered, while his father, a man of means, assumed all his expenses. And all this was gladly granted him. A swift, poignant emotion welled within him; whether pity for Tom or gratitude for himself, he scarcely knew, but he spoke out with surprising vigour and determination: "Tom, when they come to take me out, *you're coming along.*"

* * * * *

A big silver plane stood on the hard-packed runway at Fort Nelson. With sun shining on her glistening outspread wings she was poised like an eagle ready for flight. Inside the roomy cabin Bert lay on his stretcher that was placed across tilted-back seats. Tom Grant sat at his right.

They had taken off from Watson Lake that morning.

Because Bert had been insistent, obdurate, Tom had finally been persuaded to come along. Now he was, in the vernacular of the Northerner, 'coming out'—going to Edmonton.

"What, you stay here—*alone?*—nearly buried in snow—with nothing to eat? I know darn well I ate all your grub! Why, you're liable to starve!" Thus argued the rescued young flier, as they prepared to leave the bush homestead by dog train.

In the end, it had been the prospect of going in an airplane, in one of those winged wonders now so constantly zooming overhead, that had won Tom over. The trip in to Watson Lake had been trying in the extreme. Bert still shivered at intervals from the shock, the jar of the cariole, as the dogs sped over the uneven trail to Watson Lake. They had arrived spent and exhausted that same night. A plane, specially ordered down from Whitehorse, picked them up the following morning. A doctor who flew from there had examined the patient. He pronounced Bert's condition not serious, the temporary splints being surprisingly effective; advised the crash victim to be taken to Edmonton at once for hospitalization.

So he was going to be home—in Edmonton—that very evening.²

The captain and co-pilot now came out of the airport building, strode onto the smoothly rolled surface snow of the runway. They were smartly uniformed, young, energetic—full of bounce. Their very exuberance jarred upon the injured man's nerves. In they climbed; one after the other; the first man reaching at once for his ear phones. He clamped them on and switched on his radio for the test call; locked his brakes with extreme care, turned the selector valve onto portwing tank, and then snapped the inertia starter. There came an answering whine (which always recalled to Bert's mind the sound of a cream separator), then the throttle was cracked open and the engine roared forth mightily.

Bert raised himself on his elbows; shifted to one side of the stretcher to view the instrument panel in front. He watched the tachometer hand rise from 1000 to 1800 R.P.M.'s and saw that it remained steady while a magneto was snapped on and off again.

After checking prop. control and head temperatures, the pilot pulled propeller control into fine pitch to make the radio call for takeoff instructions. There followed the staccato verbiage of the code. Bert knew the brakes were being released as the engine volume was again increased with a deafening roar. The big silver bird began to taxi down the runway. Turning as lightly as a toe dancer to face into the wind, she skimmed back, gaining speed at a terrific rate. Bert heard the final "Roger" being called over the radio, and felt the tail leave the ground as the pilot shoved the wheel forward. Then with a slight pull backward they were air borne!

The man on the stretcher felt himself tingling all over with that raising of a plane. He was flying again! "By the Lord Harry," he said inwardly, "as soon as this bum leg of mine is right I'm going to be takin' 'em up again *myself*!" With a sigh he settled back on his bed, gazed at the ceiling above; noted for the first time in all his flying experience the elegance, fine craftsmanship of the cabin's interior finish. All these signs of modern life were fast bringing him back to his real world after the strange dreamlike one he had known since the crackup. But there was Tom, sitting close by, very real indeed in his outlandish wolf-trimmed garb, so strongly reminiscent of the North and those days of convalescence in the shack.

Tom's presence linked the whole past affair together with his old familiar life, and with this transition made in his mind he felt some inward misgivings—qualms—what was going to be done about Tom upon arrival? He had sent in word of his rescue man's coming. His father and mother, though, would understand, would readily acknowledge the debt of gratitude that he himself felt they owed the man who had saved him from death. Bert told himself once more that he had done the right thing in urging Tom's visit to Edmonton, the city he knew as a frontier town in the nineties.

As always, Tom was sitting quietly, making no outward sign of his impressions of this return to the modern world, and

travelling, too, in this unusual manner—flying. He had shown slight disappointment that nothing of the old fur-trading post was to be seen at their stop at Fort Nelson. Actually, such remnants of it as remained lay across the river a few miles distant from the new landing field and airport. Would Tom be able to see anything of the Edmonton that he had known before, Bert wondered?

The northern hermit continued to view the vast moving panorama of rock, river, lakes and trees below, where always a thin line—a highway—the new road to Alaska—threaded between. That line, rarely lost from view, cut like a narrow ribbon straight through long reaches of timbered valleys; curved graciously around mounting hills; swung sharply to leap across a mountain gorge. And everywhere along its limitless length was the incessant movement of men and machines. Like foraging ants they scurried to and fro, hastened from place to place, raised tiny antenna, deposited and raised again. "Worker" ants these, for certain!

After the snowstorm the weather had become quite mild; a foretaste of spring was in the air at this time of late March. Tom had seen long ovals of water-wet on Watson Lake as they flew above it that morning. His own lovely lake, nestling in its verdant valley! It was that lake which had held him to the northern wilderness, to live the free vagabond life of an Indian. He had persuaded his comrades of the Klondyke trek to go on without him. Doubtless they came to consider him just another "lost" prospector of the many that year; for he had failed to follow them. But he had found that valley abundant in game and fish—there was leisure to observe and study its flora and fauna. There was also the long quiet of winter nights needed for study and writing he had never ceased doing. Gradually he had lost the desire to go on where the scrambling multitudes of gold seekers were. Nor did he care to return to Edmonton, where there was much of greediness and land grabbing. Working in the Dominion land office he had sometimes been torn—felt inner conflict—when

dissension and strife arose between red and white man; in upholding the undeniable justice of Indian claims, while maintaining a natural loyalty to those of his own race and blood.

So he had stayed in the North, remote, isolated. A few Indians, widely scattered, were his only neighbours. These were unspoiled by contact with civilization. Like them, he found an ample livelihood in the bounties of nature. He had heard only a little of Edmonton since leaving the town in '98. Jean Borgereau had come to him for a brief time some years ago. He had found gold-panning along the Saskatchewan River bank there, meagre pickings. Dissatisfied, he had come North; told of wide illuminated streets, bridges and high buildings in that place. With the help of north bound fur trappers and trader "Indian Joe", Borgereau had eventually found his way North again to Tom's retreat. In the decade since he had made his first attempt to reach the Klondyke, it was noticeable that he had greatly changed—he suffered broken health. Life had been a burden to him and it was a blessing, Tom felt, that he had only survived a few more years after his return to the North.

In an incredibly short time the plane had reached Fort St. John. Here it was, back in '98, they had made choice of alternate routes—the overland trail or the "river" routes; both uncertain, entailing long months of heartbreaking, toilsome travel.

A passenger, a young man in army uniform, came aboard. He glanced at Tom and the man on the stretcher with a show of curiosity, and then took a newspaper from his pocket and began to read with as casual an air as a commuting suburbanite riding to business.

* * * * *

As the afternoon wore on, Tom became apprehensive of the step he had taken. He glanced at Bert beside him. The fellow had been in peaceful slumber for some hours now.

Once again the pilot became vocal: "C.P.A. to Edmonton Control Tower—20 miles north at 6,000 feet—beginning descent—landing instructions?—Over!"

The answer came at once: "You're clear to join circuit. Wind south west—ten—runway 21—altimeter twenty-nine point ninety-eight—clear to circuit."

"C.P.A. to Edmonton Control Tower—Roger—out."

Tom saw the tall slender steeple of the St. Albert Mission church glide beneath them in the spring dusk.

A great glowing arc of light was now upon the sky ahead. They were approaching the city. Tom felt a sort of elation within. There were more calls being made: "C.P.A. to Edmonton Control Tower at a thousand feet—Over."

"Edmonton Control Tower to C.P.A. Have you in sight. You are No. 2 to land behind an Anson. You're cleared to final."

"C.P.A. to Edmonton Control Tower—Roger—Out."

And presently, "Wheels down? You're cleared to land."

The portals of the city were now thrown wide. They entered its northern gate.

Straight towards that luminous glow from a high prismatic tower the plane flew like a homing bird. A vast panorama of brightly coloured blinking lights was spread beneath them like a jewelled carpet and the city lay brilliantly lighted beyond.

Involuntarily Tom braced himself for the landing. When it came, the bump was uncommonly like those he had known in old river boat landings. Then he was alighting with the other passengers on a small stairway on wheels. He was at once thrust amid the turmoil of a milling, jostling throng of people, glaring lights, the clamour of countless vibrating, honking motors. The press of civilization was upon him. He stood helpless, defenceless against that ruthless onslaught. He quailed under it and pressed close against the fence for support, fearful, anxious and alone.

Nearby, some young boys favoured him with bright, curious

stares. "Jeepers! look what they hauled with 'em," one said. There was sniggering among them.

Bert's parents were there, with a tall youth, who was Bert's younger brother. His parents were a handsome pair, the mother of surprisingly youthful appearance. Her hand hovered, touched the blanketed form on the stretcher. "Yes, dear, we'll attend to everything—everything!" The father bent over the stretcher, followed it along. "Yes, son—the best hotel—we've made all arrangements. Luckily we got Halliwell's reservations—we'll see that he is treated like the prince he is."

Bert's eager voice could be heard, too, as white uniformed attendants carefully carried his stretcher to the waiting ambulance—"and, dad, he needs dogs—and—and glasses."

"Yes, yes," the parents echoed together—"dogs—glasses—sure—sure!"

The wife clutched her husband's arm tight. "Just think, next week he'll be home—*home!*" She grasped her younger son's arm, too, and shivered between them in a kind of ecstasy. She saw Tom. "Glasses"—"dogs"—"dogs and glasses!" and she threw back her head and laughed like a delighted child.

Still another hovered over the stretcher, now being slid into the back of the ambulance car—a trim figured one in a grey fur coat. Faced from him, Tom saw her as all grey, the coat, the hat and the crisp curls revealed between.

Bert was having a last word with her—" 'Course it hurts and I can feel it if you dig it like *that*," in a voice that held the banality of affectionate familiarity, "—n thanks for the cigs, Mrs. Mac—*see you all tomorrow.*"

"Mrs. Mac? *Mrs. Mac*—they always call my grandmother *Mrs. Mac* at home."

Someone jerked his musing thoughts from Bert and his family by a touch on his elbow. "Your taxi is right here, sir, I'm going with you ——" It was the younger brother, whose name was "Peter."

Tom stepped inside—Peter followed carrying his old Gladstone portmanteau that had weathered the Yukon trek and

his father's ocean voyage before he was born—a most capacious and durable affair. The two were seated in the taxi's spacious tonneau. As it moved to a gliding start amid the throngs of people, Tom glanced through the car window and found himself looking squarely into the eyes of the lady in grey. *Birdie MacArthur!* A Birdie, to be sure, with the face of an older person, but having the same straightforward, challenging look, the unmistakable clear gaze of the gallant lady he would never forget; Miss Birdie MacArthur, the school teacher. Recognition had been in her steady hazel eyes, too—of that he was certain.

Peter was pointing out things as they rode on, getting the impression that his companion was a good listener—a *little too good—I'd better change the subject and make him talk about his trapping.*

All the while the older man's thoughts were actually greatly distracted in an effort to adjust themselves to his surprisingly moving experience. Bert, then, the boy he had dragged to his cabin and spent himself to save, was *Birdie's own boy*—her grandson! There was genuine joy in the thought—a benign peace flowed over his mind like a blessing. He liked Bert, and Bert was like Birdie, had her same direct glance and was more like her than this boy who was now beside him, saying: "When I pulled the snare tight, the little codger bit my hand —."

"Oh—you musn't let them, Peter. I have them trained, even the weasels, not to bite me." Tom heard himself saying this, quite facetiously, in his response to Peter.

Peter laughed. (The old boy's got something—wish he'd say more. Wolf on his parka 'n boots, and a bearded face like G.B.S.!)

The "old boy" was looking at Peter with his thick eyebrows drawn together speculatively. *Now I was this lad's age when I came here and thought I had wisdom—knew all of life*—his mind ran back. For a moment the long years of bush life became almost a nullity, only a period of passive contemplation and he was a boy again, full of youth's ardent illusions about

life. He had thought to escape the world with its passions, fashions, vices and mania—and some Providence, the maimed flyer, had brought him back to it—and Birdie. What was it Bert had told him? "Once we kids were swimming in the river and the current nearly got me for good. We never told anyone, except I told 'Mrs. Mac'—grandma, that is—'Why?'—Oh, she's a game girl, my grandma is!"

Tom saw her again, 'that game girl', a small courageous figure, in a valiant struggle to maintain the discipline with those unruly man-sized youths of her class. In that same spirit she had faced life—and it had not defeated her. That gallant spirit was still there in her erect carriage—in the glance of her eyes.

The car was rolling smoothly between brightly lighted shop windows. They reached the hotel.

"Yes, of course, Peter, I shall see you again—indeed, it's been a pleasure for me too, to have had this brief ride (it was Tom's first automobile too, though he did not mention that) and a chat with you."

Cripes! His Oxford accent with that Eskimo get up!

"Certainly, I want to go to see Bert—the University hospital?—yes, tomorrow—later—after I've looked around me a bit."

"Well, good night, sir."

"Good night, Peter, my boy."



It was already broad daylight when the sharp ringing of a bell at Tom's ear wakened him from an exhausted slumber. Its shrilling clamour kept on and on, would stop abruptly, and then burst the silence again with its strident sound. Tom cursed, groaned, shut his ears against it and then in desperation grasped the instrument from the table. The ringing ceased. The part in his right hand made the squawking sound of a young duckling. Tom leaned closer—it was again the voice of

Bert's brother, Peter. There were repeated "hellos" being said and then he heard, "Father wants to know if there is anything we can do for you".

Tom knew not what to answer. The suggestion of being a charge, a dependent upon any other being was to him humiliating, contrary to his whole code of life. He was acutely, painfully embarrassed. In some way he managed to convey to young Peter that there was nothing—*nothing*, for which he wanted.

The last remark he heard was Peter saying, "Father will call later". Then there was a click—silence.

For a while Tom eyed one of the smooth black objects that fitted so admirably in his palm. Then he drew up the quilted satin comforter at the foot of his bed; rolled it firmly about the two pieces and shoved the bundle under the bedstead as far as the cord would allow. Having thus satisfactorily disposed of this immediate nuisance of civilization his eye fell on a small radio that was also on the bedside table. He ran his fingers uncertainly over its face. He turned the switch as he had seen the pilot do on the plane. The duckling squawks came again and then a loud dissonant voice blared forth: "Nee-yews flashes by Hudson's Bay Company!" "God!" breathed the man so recently come from the North, and snapped off the switch with a firm hand.

His head felt heavy. His throat was dry and hot and the room's atmosphere was stiflingly warm. He was very thirsty—wanted water. There was a china pitcher labeled 'ice water' that stood on a small tray with drinking glasses. All were highly polished—bone dry. The flunky had murmured something about ice water before leaving him last night. He hadn't wanted it then—had had a thought of all his past efforts to wrest drinking water *from* ice—wanted only to be left alone and adjust himself to unusual surroundings. Now he longed for the cold spring water on his homestead.

He walked to the window to see if the river were nearby. There it lay below. A stream of open water near the centre reflected the dense growth of fir trees on the south bank beyond.

It looked much the same as he remembered the scene from the Hermitage at this elevated view.

Hurriedly he groped for boots and garments. With a hitch here, another there, he was dressed in the deft quick manner of a woodsman. He wanted to be outside—breathe the freshness of out of doors and get to the street below.

The feel of hard ground, packed snow underfoot, was welcome after that thickly carpeted floor, which permitted no sound of footfall. He had felt well nigh smothered amid those rich furnishings, heavily draped windows, deep cushioned chairs, and overly soft bed of his hotel room.

Walking on towards the edge of the high river embankment, he looked down at the bridge—the one which they built before he left. The steep incline of steps leading below did not tempt him to go down to it.

He turned away, realized he was almost giddy from hunger. He must get food somewhere.

Across the street to his right was ground he knew well. There had stood McCauley's livery stable. A splendid ornate building was in its place—but a tree³, a maple, still flourished at its side.

Sometimes trees were left to live on, long after those who had planted them had gone.

After a short walk he found a restaurant. Entering it was like coming into the mess room of a military barracks, so many uniformed persons were there. The uniforms varied in colour, cut and insignia. Counters and tables were occupied. Tom was about to turn away when a friendly young man called, "Sit here, mister, we're through". He gave his mates a shove and they moved closer together, made space along the wall seat for Tom.

"Raikin you're a Nawtherner, pardner," said one with a ribbon bedecked breast.

Tom answered: "Might not all in Canada be considered so?"

"Wai-ll, yais. But y'see my home's Kaintucky. Ahm goin' 'way up Nawth—this—s—soon," he ended more cautiously.

They stayed on while Tom ate, chatted pleasantly. Tom found their perfect ease and freedom infectious. He liked them. He left the restaurant feeling refreshed, more in the mood to explore his old stamping ground.

He struck off from the Jasper Avenue thoroughfare—walked a little north on the street once known as "Howard" Avenue, saw the little green and white hip-roofed house⁴ that had once been the baker's. The sight warmed him. Well he remembered as a lad he had gone there to get bread loaves for Canon Newbridge at the Hermitage. He used to see the baker's buxom rosy-cheeked youngsters about the place.

Before he realized, he was at the door, had opened it and walked inside. A bell tinkled and a Chinaman appeared from a steaming back room. Through the white lattice grill the Chinaman beheld him with something like alarm.

"No take! no moah!—no moah! Too much laundley. Too much!" he shook his head vigorously.

"There was once a baker here," Tom faltered.

"Nah. Nah. No bake." He brightened, motioned outward. "Nexth block—nexth block!" He waved Tom away, practically shoosed him off.

It was clear; he wanted no further custom.

The Northerner continued meandering along his way. Everywhere were high buildings walling in the streets. Some distance ahead he saw a break—open ground. Coming nearer he saw the block of ground was fenced, horses were tied along its top rail—a market square with wagons of wood, fish, grain and vegetables. That was better. The country had yielded all this. Inside the market building was an even greater abundance of produce. Quantities of dressed poultry, fine vegetables and great banks of flowers. When his father had lived here in the '50's they had told him this country's only profit yielding product was *fur*! His father, a good gardener and horticulturist, had always wished to disprove this. "I, his son, did not help in this," thought Tom, "I back slid. I wanted to show the Indians how they *should* live and kept remote from civilization." He

went out again—went to stand beside those quiet horses. He stroked one's sensitive nostrils, patted its neck, felt a wordless sympathy.

An enormous sign⁵ was hung on a tall edifice nearby, with letters so large he could read them. "WE RUN OUR CITY AS FREE MEN, THANKS TO CANADA'S FIGHTING SONS".

"Zounds! They must mean it. Running their city—like 'free men'—'fighting sons'!" Here was something of the spirit of those "vigilantes" of the '80's. It somehow pleased Tom's fancy and he would have liked voicing his approval of the forthright spirit behind the words of that sign. Only an inherent diffidence prevented his going to that building of civic administration to do this. He walked a little closer to the edifice of the flaunting sign. As he neared two men (whom Tom assumed to be business men of the city), he overheard some of their spirited conversation: "By jove — Yes sir! — I've got a place now"—"Well say, isn't that a bit of luck?"—"Pretty far out—though nice and roomy and if we could just get a telephone now, we'd be all right. But not a chance! Do y' know what they told me at the city hall? There're nearly thirty thousand additional people—Americans—now in the city, so there isn't another goddamned telephone to be had—." "I'm trying to get a radio and can't—" replied the other man as their words faded in the distance.

Again Tom was reminded of another day when there was an influx of people to Edmonton—multitudes who came in the late nineties from all over the United States and Canada to outfit for Alaska, but in truth, it had not been telephones and radios which they had demanded. It had been rivercraft, horses and horsefeed for which they had scrambled then. Telephones! Radios! Ringing and blaring their insistent intrusion upon a man's quiet thought and privacy. The modern city continued alternately to delight and dismay him.

Tom Grant turned and made his way back up the street. Rows and rows of cars lined either side. They, like the horses,

stood still, while all persons he saw were in constant motion—all urgently bent on some pressing business. Business?—had he any? Once yearly he made a simple transaction with Indian Joe for his fur catch, that was the extent of his own business. It kept him neither rich nor poor nor had Joe in thirty years ever tried to cheat him.

Another sign caught his attention, "Furs Bought and Sold". When he went in that place a young girl with golden hair in many curls came to the counter. There Tom tried unsuccessfully to glean any information regarding the marketing of furs—she continued to reiterate that he should go to the fur stores—the big retail department stores—there he could secure almost any kind of fur he wanted. "We just ship furs"—up the street, though, a little way on, were those departmental stores where one could buy anything from a pin to a well built house. Here, they only "shipped" furs.

So Tom left the place which concerned itself entirely with the shipping of furs. He had no wish to disclose that he himself had no further interest in furs other than the stalking and trapping of fur-coated animals.

He noticed that practically all women who passed him were wearing coats of some kind of fur—big cloaks made of fine glossy full-furred pelts. Beneath these dark fur cloaks their stockinged legs showed conspicuously. He watched numbers of ladies as they crossed and recrossed the crowded thoroughfare, tripping daintily, revealing long lengths of that antelope colored hosiery due to the brevity of their skirts.

They assembled, grouped, then spilled across the street in flocks, after which scores of vehicles rushed by. It was turn about, for right of way.

A tall, fair lady came to where her friends had awaited her. As she drew near they exclaimed "Well, look at *you*—going around in March with *those*—like those silly Americans." All looked down at her shoes.

Tom was shocked to see that her dainty slippers exposed heels and toes to the elements.

"Silly Americans? You mean *smart* Americans," the queenly one answered archly.

"Darling, they *are* sweet! Get 'em in the States?"

"Mnh—Mngh!—right at this local trading company beside us," replied the girl, waving airily towards the great store nearby.

Then Tom remembered some boots he had purchased at 'a local trading company' for Miette one day long, long ago—felt boots, soles an inch thick, with toes and heels reinforced with leather—and Miette had hugged them to her heart in delighted admiration. They would keep her feet warmer than her moccasins!

A departmental store stood on the opposite corner, its trim contours gleaming in metal and glass. Inside, merchandise was quite magnificently displayed. An unusual sight claimed his attention. From the throng gathered in the great centre aisle, a moving line of people was elevated to an upper level of the store without any action on their part. Effortlessly they were borne up, with eyes uplifted, like saints rising heavenward. He watched this unusual phenomenon for a long while fascinated and entertained.

"Anything I can do for you?" This came from a handsome dark haired young woman behind a counter. There was an aloof formality in the tone, the while she smoothed a glossy coiffure with scarlet tipped fingers. Tom faltered, felt in his pockets, there wasn't tobacco there.

"I would like some tobacco, please."

"Sorry—tobacco isn't sold in this store." Her voice held some hauteur. Other clerks were looking their way. He wandered on, sensing their silent laughter.

He had had need for but one thing—but one article to purchase; the great merchandise mart did not supply it.

As he tarried along the street he felt a great weariness. There was no place to rest—street noises were racking—made his head swim.

Where were those good old stores where one sat, with others, around a fat-bellied stove? Where sociability took precedence over the business of purchasing? Close to the street corner was a popcorn wagon. The appetizing odor of baked corn filled his nostrils. A man, elderly like himself, busied himself filling bags, selling to customers.

"Business good, sir?"

"Yeh. Lotsa people now!"

Tom felt unwilling to walk further. He sat down on the street curb alongside the popcorn wagon. He was aware of darting, curious glances of passersby, but he was beyond caring. He was tired. Why was he tired, when he hadn't walked half the distance of his trapline trip? Big, rubber-tired wheels were turning right before his eyes. It made him feel sleepy. One wheel, bigger than most, slowed, ceased turning, stopped dead. Then he felt himself being practically lifted up, mounted in a high wagon-like vehicle. "Well, ahm assurin' you boys this *is* emergency," one fellow was saying.

It was the drawling voice of the young soldier whose home was Kentucky. Tom was put between him and the driver on the front seat. The car rumbled on; a sturdy, drab-coloured thing, unenclosed, with but a protecting shield of glass in front.

"Pardner, where be you bound? We'll just take you on a ways. Frainds meet a Yukon citizen—there is Texas at your left, drivin'—Californians in the back—we managed to get them there (this on an aside). We-all think this weather's fine—but, mister! (he shook his head thoughtfully) has it been winter-like?"

Kentucky's pleasant drawl went on as the car darted through the traffic at an amazing speed. They were interested in hearing of the North from Tom. He was asked many questions; about the temperature, snow depth, and how light was it at midnight in the summer?

Before long they had sighted the splendid dome of the legislative building. Tom told them that it was on those grounds where the fort had stood, and that he wanted to go there.

"Finel Okay!" responded the driver. Tom noted there was much use of that last word in their speech.

Forthwith the vehicle was turned in that direction. They went from Jasper Avenue to a side street, which soon brought them directly by Tom's old place of employ—the red brick building that he had once considered the "new" land office building. It had been extended and the maples around it had grown widely outspread branches.

"Cute!" came from one of the back seat boys. "Awfully cute!"

"Whassat?" yelled Kentucky above the jeep's din.

"Those lil' ol' relics of the last war," the Californian shouted back with a flick of his hand to indicate several field guns that stood out prominently in front of the building.

"*Edmonton Fusiliers*" his companion read aloud from a sign that was over the entrance door of the building.

So that was it—they were using his former office and living quarters for a barracks—and those guns before were "little old relics of the last war!"

In a trice they had reached and circled the terraced park-like grounds that surrounded the imposing legislative building.

There was not a trace left of the original structure of the old fort. The fort, that had served, protected its people for nearly a century—was gone—all wiped away—clean. Only once did the older man ask the driver to halt. He pointed to a fine old hardwood tree⁷ that grew below the eastern driveway.

"That tree," he said, pointing down to the right of the driveway, "is one of many I helped to plant when I was a lad, helping the factor's gardner. It must have been about the year '76."

They had stopped the car and for a little while there was silence as they looked below in the hollow where stood the gnarled old veteran with its wide, outspread branches.

"You should see how big and tall the palms grow on Wilshire Boulevard," said one of the uniformed fellows in the back seat.

"Big! Tall! Wilshire Boulevard!" Kentucky's voice was scornful. "Why, this is a *wonderful* tree—one that Tom, here, planted 'way back in—when was it—'76? Do you mind that? Now Ah'm tellin' you, you didn't *have* any palms on your Boulevard then!"

"Our redwoods grow even tal—," began California Number Two.

"Redwoods! Palms!" Kentucky turned on them with brows puckered in pained surprise. "Why this," he made an expansive gesture toward Tom's tree, "is a Canadian maple tree—a regular Canadian *maple syrup* tree, I betcha!"

"Kentucky gentleman, you wouldn't be mistaken, now would you?" was the soft-spoken answer from behind.

The banter went on—front to back—back to front again—Kentucky to California—California back to Kentucky—then crisscrossed between Californians and Texas. Their ready wit, apt repartee, which belied their serious mien, kept too fast a tempo, it confounded the gentleman from the Yukon.

While they had been touring the grounds Tom had watched a streetcar gliding across the great high bridge. Suddenly it came over him that he would like to cross the river that way.

So he was duly escorted by a young stalwart to a south-bound tram car. On leaving him Kentucky said to the conductor: "Mind my friend gets safe passage across this river." The conductor disregarded the sally.

On the car were crowds of people—young girls with coats flung carelessly across their shoulders, with their hair hanging long and flowing. They carried huge piles of books vicariously supported on hip and abdomen. Tom could decipher some of the titles. He was amazed to find that many of them treated of higher science: "Inorganic Chemistry," by Mellor; "Zoology," Parker and Haswell; Robbin's and Rickett's "Botany"; Darwin's "Origin of Species". As a student at Oxford he had selected every book with care, asking a don's advice regarding text books to follow. The don had said: "Darwin has the newer thesis. By all means read it. But study Gosse. He is substan-

tially sound." He had spent months in studying the heavy treatise of the latter, conscientiously following the don's advice. He had never got around to the "Origin of Species" before the close of the term. Evidently these young students did not restrict their field of reading to the degree he had.

The car came to a stop, loaded passengers, and was ready to start on again, when another young girl with books and parcels sped from the curb like a cabree to board the tram. As graceful as a gazelle, she leapt onto the entrance step just as the car started to move.

"Thanks, darling!" she gasped to the man at the controls as she swung inside. She was panting with the effort of her run. Tom half rose, that she might be seated. She pressed him back.

"No. 'T'sallright, darling," she exhaled gustily, and pressed on to the back of the car.

'Darling, *darling!*' How they bandied that word of intimate endearment!

As the car mounted the bridge there could be seen on the right embankment below a solid mass of trucks and motor vehicles⁸—heads pointing one way, side by side, row upon row they stood; silent, waiting, like a school of fish ready for instant flight at a touch.

Slowly and carefully the street car proceeded across the top of the long high bridge towards the south bank. On that side of the river had lived McDonalds, McKernans and Garneaus. Far, far below lay the white frozen river, and across were the treed slopes that would soon reveal a wealth of spring green.

When the car made its first stop, many of the passengers scrambled out. Tom alighted too, and there before him was a stately, shaft-like monument of white, and not far away were some gravestones.

"Lord! Had they actually interred him, Garneau, on his own land?"

Then he saw beneath the lettered name of "Garneau", a cinema theatre—a second glance at the misleading gravestones

across the street revealed them to be merely displayed for sale; and he realized his foolish mistake.

He kept close to the river bank, going north by west. Young people, yet more students with books, were coming toward him in numbers. The girls came swinging along in strong energetic strides, tossing their flying manes like young colts. Seeing the tram car, they came faster, their pace quickened to a run, became a gallop. The onrush began to take on proportions—they would call him 'darling'—Tom turned—fled down a lane.

Here were fences and trees that sheltered, like the narrow lanes he'd known in boyhood. There ahead were tall towers—the University? Then the hospital to which Bert had been taken would not be far. Should he find his way there now?

He found himself strangely reluctant to do this, though in all likelihood he there would meet again his former old friend. Also others would be there—members of Bert's family—"see you *all* tomorrow," Bert had said. The prospect was singularly disquieting. *I shall wait*, said Tom to himself, *and go later*, and realized that he was still that "woman shy" person Milly Newbridge, Mrs. Mjolsness and even Birdie had often said him to be.

That lady in grey, with her so assured presence—would she be the same Birdie he had known? That her late husband had been the banker MacConnell he now deemed certain. "*Mrs. 'Mac'*—everyone calls her '*Mrs. Mac*.'" He recalled they had called the banker "Mac" too, in the early days.

Already he had turned away from the site of the University and was going north to the river. Coming towards the embankment, was another old maple tree⁹, Garneau's own, grown out of all bounds. The deep gully, where Garneau's spring had been, was gone. Fine modern homes flanked the old trail along the Saskatchewan; but the path was still there that descended alongside the spring to the river below. Why was it that one delighted more in finding things as one knew and remembered them?

On this steep, snow-covered slope boys and girls were sleighing and skiing down the curving road to the river. It made his

going hard. There were high-pitched cries of "tra-ack—tra-ack!" with sliders yelling for right of way. After he'd gone down some distance he regretted the way he'd taken. Looking back up the road he realized it would be even harder to return. He had to cling to side bushes to let the children by and take care not to slip on the icy paths of skis and sleds.

Somewhere along this wooded south bank was Borgereau's shack. Poor misguided Jean, living on the fringe of a modern city, and having the natural nomadic instinct of an Indian. It hadn't worked out—he had succumbed to drink in the end. Anyway, he was given decent burial up North.

Tired from the long walk downhill, Tom reached the foot of the bluff. All there was unfamiliar. The lumberyard and mill were gone, the brickyard, too. Grouped around one of the disused clay pits were more children with sleighs. One little fellow drew near to Tom, gazed at him with solemn dark eyes. He had the dusky, square-contoured features of an Indian child.

"No," he shook his head, "there isn't a lumber mill," he assured Tom. But there were houses over *that* way (he pointed eastward) under the high bridge.

The sun had gone from the lea of the valley, the chill of melting snow was in the air. It crept into one's bones. Tom ached, longed for the rest, quiet and warmth of his own cabin in the North. He regretted ever leaving it.

"Annie lives in a log house," the child went on, speaking to himself in the manner of children. "I can go to my 'mother's' mother's house all by myself. I don't get lost."

Somehow Tom's weariness and bewilderment were communicated to the young boy. He reached out to him. "We can go under the bridge to my mother's mother's house."

The two walked on together, hand in hand—straggling figures—the young child and the weary man. The roadway took them under the elevated bridge that Tom had crossed.

"I like the big bridge. Do you like the big bridge?" said the boy. Tom nodded.

"I like the bridge in the night time with a big train on it."

Yes, Tom agreed that that kind of bridge would be likeable, too. The boy had more to tell. His brother was going to school, the Little Flower School. He, too, would go there after his birthday, when he would be six.

An airplane soared overhead, flicked a quick shadow over them as they came nearer the river's edge. Was Kentucky or Texas piloting that plane?

"I like airplanes," the boy went on gravely, he pointed upwards, "that is a United States plane. If the star on it is red, then it wouldn't be a United States plane—it would be a 'Rooshun' plane."

Red stars. Russian planes. This was an observant, intelligent lad. His speech was clear, well enunciated, too. Some day he would be a good citizen, this half-breed child. The adjustment, then, had been made between red and white man. It had only needed time—some forgetting.

The road passed close by the wee house that Tom knew was that of the dwarfed half-breed Muchias. Muchias, who all his life had been a close friend of the river, had known the Saskatchewan's uncertain moods and its unpredictable behaviour in springtime. Tom looked back at the tiny door that had often framed that squat figure, and would, perhaps, have stopped and knocked, but the child's purpose was now stronger than his own. His narrative broke in: "Peter Repchuk counts in Russian. Pete tells my brother. I can count to six in Russian."

The boy, encouraged by his listener's murmured appreciation, went on: "My biggest brother is going to have wings soon."

There was still more. The "biggest" brother's girl made real airplanes in a big, *big* place. (He pointed across the river). He, himself could make one that could fly a long way, though not high. All this was amazing to Tom, told with an earnestness that belied the child's tender years.

They came in sight of the log house that was Annie's. Tom knew it at once. It was the homestead of the former mill owner,

Walter, that was built of squared, hand-sawed logs the same year he had come to Fort Edmonton with Daniel Newbridge. It was still comely, welcoming, with tall surrounding trees casting long blue shadows over its whitewashed walls. Tom remembered it as he had seen it last, during that spring flood of '97 when just its roof was visible. He saw that the old building had sagged, sunk deep in the earth with all these years.

This was like meeting an old friend; his heart was filled with grateful warmth. Tom reached in his pocket. He wanted to reward this boy who had brought him to his "mother's mother's house." All the silver pieces he could find readily in his pocket were larger than he wished to give—quarters and half dollars—but there was a large copper, the beaver coin with a dinge on its side that Borgereau had given him—that is, traded him—for a badly ripped weasel skin. (Well, wasn't the *coin* damaged, too?)

Jean told him one of the young children, the son of a professor, had given it to him in exchange for a pink shell he had found in the graveyard. Then *it was Miette's shell!* This child, he said, had called the shell a "brack-a-pod-billy-thella" and had set his heart on having it. Jean had been sorely beset by children visiting his place.

The odd coin was now offered the Indian boy child. He took it from Tom, eyed it with curiosity, and then smiled—a shy pleased smile—and continued to urge on to the house of his grandmother, the log house which had withstood flood and fire throughout the years.

When they opened the back door to the kitchen, Annie was there. She scarcely paused in stirring a batter of biscuit dough. Her eyes lighted at the sight of her grandchild and she gave her head a casual nod towards a chair nearby for Tom.

"Sid down—the ol' man'll be back."

The arm chair was worn smooth from many sittings. It was hide covered too, like Tom's own. The trapper from the North dropped in it like a plummet.

The boy spoke in an undertone to his grandmother. "Look what he gave me."

"Hungh," grunted Annie, "pretty old money."

"Can I buy things with it?"

"I dunno—better show it to Grandpa Petôh—he knows that kind of money."

The boy kept on watching Annie's biscuit-cutter etch out neat rounds of dough on the table.

Annie went on: "Poor ol' man. So ol' he can't walk any more."

"Is Grandpa Petôh a *hundred* years old?"

"Well,—I guess—pretty nearly."

The boy again studied the coin in his palm.

"I'm going up the bush to Grandpa Petôh's place sometime, maybe."

"Sure. The ol' man'd like to see you. Poor ol' man—pretty sick."

The child became serious in thought, held the coin pressed between both hands.

"I'll let him have my penny—I'll tell him to keep it for me, Annie," he said, soberly.

Tom looked about the kitchen. The big stove was warm, heated for the baking. Annie raised a lid and he saw her increase a blue-white flame by a mere twist of a lever. He missed the familiar wood box filled with fuel.

He looked through the doorway to the front room. Canon Newbridge had sometimes conducted church services there before their church was built. There had been a fireplace of mud and wattles on the east wall. It had kept them warm. The low-ceilinged room was furnished, like then, with simple needful things—as his own.

Here was quiet and peace; no hurry, no fuss, no questioning. Here he could rest—a veritable godsend for him now. Being among the city's multitudes had been unduly wearing. Above, on the wall across, a clock showed the time of afternoon. "*I must be on my way soon,*" he thought, with gaze still resting upon the clock's shelf with its quaint supports of deer horn. There on that shelf board, he knew, was the name of his father,

carved in a moment of whimsy, and quiet reflection. A boy then, as he himself had been, and as Peter was now, with life before, promising adventure and happiness. With John Grant had been Jack Prudham. He pictured them and himself as they had been, aspiring young men, and Daniel too, preaching in that room, so fired with a missionary's zeal—all struggling and striving against odds for the betterment of life on the frontier. Their spirit filled the room as he sat in this house built by a pioneer.

He looked at the strong, capable half-breed woman as she deftly prepared her biscuits. This "Annie" might easily have been one of the many of Miette's charges. There had been "Annies" too, among that host of young ones she cared for. The peace and warmth of the place made him very drowsy. Tom's head nodded forward, sank upon his breast—he fell quietly asleep.

The clock ticked noisily on. It disturbed the sleeper in a fitful dream: his lady in grey was before him, chiding and arguing with him in that old staunch manner that once gave him such delight—"You shouldn't let that ticking clock bother you, Tom, its just marking *time*—dividing life in silly little segments—it's not so important in our world—the world, you know, is *idea*—perception by a perceiver—transient phenomena of will—."

Birdie, of all people, was quoting Schopenhauer!

* * * * *

At this time, in the big turret-towered hotel across the river, an impressive, well-dressed man was striding along the carpeted corridor leading to the room Tom had deserted. The flunky ahead carried an air light bag which was about a quarter the size of the one he had brought to this same room the night before. The man saw to his surprise that three men and two cameras ready for action were standing directly in his path for entering his room.

"No," said the important guest, a little nettled at their curious looks and question, "I am *not* from the *North* nor even on my way south. I have just arrived from the east and am going west, so take your cameras to another direction, please!"

The reporter and the two cameramen representing the city's rival newspapers, gloomily packed up their paraphernalia and left.



Above, the white-starred plane made a gigantic circle in the sky. Texas was at the controls. He trimmed the nose for a climb at 170 miles per hour as the huge dome of the legislative building glinted below. His spirits were high. Down there, in one of those fine houses, was Joan. Joan, the Canadian girl, whom he had found in "Edmonton Town". Just thinking about her, and the way she looked last night at the Canadian-American ball, made him glow. Let's see, who was going to have a shower for her today, Hilda, Dottie or Babs? What a lot of fuss women liked to make over a wedding! He was going to take Joan to Texas. Joan said she was sure she'd love it, his home state, all over the place—just like the Canadian west.

Below, the city lay outspread like an intricate pattern in mosaic before his eyes.

Shoving the nose down slightly, he made a steep turn to the left and saw old Strathcona down his wing tip, then recovering from the turn, he crossed the river again, went over the hotel that looked like a feudal castle. Under his right wing he saw that coal mine on the river bank. Funny, having a coal mine right in the city! Again climbing for altitude, the plane headed North.

And far below a starry-eyed girl, Joan, heard above her friends' cajoling chatter the drowning whine of a plane. Her heart skipped a beat. Was it Tex? On a flight North?

"Helen, these spoons are simply gorgeous." Eager fingers went on undoing other daintily-wrapped parcels—*"And what perfectly darling towels, Marg . . ."*

Tex, going over a world of glistening snow—Tex, who'd never even seen snow before the war . . ." "*. . . and real linen, with linen now so scarce . . .*"

Now he's going on and on—miles, miles and miles away—to a land of glittering blue ice—Eskimos—huskies—caribou herds—furs—mukluks! Indians too, and deep, wide rivers with odd pearly shells of mystery on their shores. Will he find—bring me back—just *one*?

"*Oh, fancy your getting me an electric egg-beater—a mixer; mother will positively envy me!*"

The sound of the plane became louder; it went roaring right over the house.

"*. . . Honestly, girls, I don't know—he never tells me—military secrecy, y'know.*"

Joan's eldest brother, Donald, a brilliant engineer, was already "North" in that vast land of road building—pipe laying—mining engineers—chemical analysts—forbidden territory—pitchblende¹⁰—radium—uranium—*uranium*! Everything secret—and terribly, *terribly* important.

"Isn't she lucky to be getting a husband who dances like Tex does?" This from Joan's younger sister. "And don't you just adore the way he *talks*? He told me the cutest story about when he was a boy in school, only *he* called it 'skew-ule' . . ." The sister gushed on—just a freshman in college—you forgave her.

There were more gifts and more exclamations all around. The door bell rang. A housemaid hurried from a back room to answer it, but before reaching the front door a spirited young girl had burst in.

"Hilda!" shrieked the young sister, "girls, Hilda's here from the hospital!" The call was echoed by others: "Oh! Hilda, Hilda—you're here—from the hospital—Oh! Oh!—" Yes, undoubtedly, Hilda from the hospital was there. She had breezed straight into their midst like a brisk blast from out of doors.

"How is he? Tell us how he looked—Oh, isn't that gra-and—darling, aren't you *terribly* gla-ad?" All the while Hilda was

being divested of her gloves, bag, coat, hat and a parcel. She was breathing like a runner between gasping replies: "He" looked fine—"he" was grand—"he" was coming home next week—she was happy—she was glad, and she had hurried like mad—dashing down town from the hospital—and then coming 'way back across to *this* side of the river again—and—"Oh yes, a most exciting thing has happened—here, bring back my coat, I want my hanky—well, you know the old hermit who saved him? He's gone—vanished, and Bert's father telephoned and telephoned and couldn't contact him, line busy or no answer, and Mr. Halliwell has changed his mind and *is coming* after all, by 'plane and there *isn't a vacant hotel room in the city*. Well, Mrs. 'Mac' was there at the hospital too, and do you know what she said? 'Oh, nonsense! there isn't anything to worry about—I've got a big house—Tom can stay with *me—we'll live together!*' "

"Oh, wow!" chorused the girls, and one said, "Positively precious!"

"Well," Hilda went on, holding her audience with the easy assurance of a skilled dramatist, "it seems this 'Tom' person is an old acquaintance of Mrs. Mac's—she knew him as a girl, simply years ago—and she's quite thrilled to see him—'the old boy friend back to town'—sort of thing. Bert's father was frightfully relieved having this major housing problem taken off his hands, and Bert said—you know how he and Mrs. Mac always rib each other?—Bert looked at his dad and said: 'Now *doesn't* she sound sweet?' And Mrs. Mac mocked: 'She certainly does, but *very!*' And Bert went on teasing: 'Perhaps you'd like to be given a wedding shower?' " There were long breathy "Oh's" at this—"Then do you know what she came back with, without batting an eye? 'Ripping idea! Make it a *book* shower—new books, terrific books—books on philosophy. Tom'll want to read them with his new glasses'." Merriment over this was unbounded, it chimed through the room in high, rippling peals of laughter.

"And hearing them, you'd swear they meant every word they said," Hilda added for emphasis.

"Let's see what's in this parcel," one said, and straightway it was opened. For her shower gift to Joan, Hilda had chosen a book. It was a treatise on cookery of excellent worth, enjoying world wide reputation.

"—A thousand recipes and space in the back to add special ones of our own," said Hilda proudly.

"Put an oilcloth cover on it to keep it clean," suggested one.

"I know I'll use it a lot," murmured Joan appreciatively.

"—Positively your daily prayer," added another.

"I know a swell recipe for making macaroons without any baking."

"And I know a pineapple salad that's simply precious," put in still another.

They decided to write the recipes in the book without delay. Shall we do it in pencil? Ink? Joan said it didn't matter which was used.

She had somehow reached the window that gave upon the broad bend in the river. From there one enjoyed a sweeping vista of the city spread upon the north bank. Joan's father, senior professor in the University close by, often said they built the house around that view from the window. She stood and watched the plane disappear far off in the azure distance, her hand shading eyes that were a-dream, as a woman's are, yearning for a lover's return.

Now the plane was speeding beyond the airport with its miles of landing field, and then it swept past Calder with its roundhouses and railway yards showing below.

Levelling off at 7,000 feet, Texas pulled power—adjusting propeller control for straight flight. He was on the beam—going North.

He flew on and on, leaving behind the blocked-off squares of farmland, field and pasture; came over the circled land of rock and lake; then passed beyond the timbered patches of foothill country, until majestic peaks were white against the sky. Unafraid, and conscious of power, the great shining bird soared higher and higher until these were but a dimpled, wavy field of ice and snow below.

Above those mountains, steadily on and throughout the night the winged creature flew, when early dawn brought the glimpse of ice-blue seas before. Undefined, spirit unconquerable, the flier kept on through the skies, true to his course, northward—northward—ever on to the North.

References

CHAPTER I.

¹R. H. G. Leveson Gower, *The Beaver*, March 1934; (Archivist of the Hudson's Bay Company, London):

"William Tomison joined the Company in 1760, he was the first Englishman to visit the site of Winnipeg, and later developed the trade on the Saskatchewan River. . . . In the autumn of 1795 it was found requisite to build a house yet higher up the North Saskatchewan, and on October 5th, Tomison arrived 'where the Canada Companies had built houses during the summer'. The fort now erected was named Edmonton—possibly because of Sir James Winter Lake, at this time deputy governor of the Company, was the owner of property at Edmonton, County Middlesex—and was adjacent to Fort Augustus of the North-West Company, the situation being on the left bank of the North Saskatchewan about two miles above the mouth of the Sturgeon River. This house was Tomison's winter headquarters until 1799, with the exception of the season 1796-97, when he visited Europe. Whilst in Europe on this occasion he was presented by the Governor and Committee with a sword 'as a Mark of Esteem'. . . . We may picture Tomison as a man endowed with considerable energy but not with the virtue of maintaining friendly relations with whom he came in contact. . . . William Auld, 'Chief' at Churchill, actually refers in 1809 to 'the universal ill-will which the Indians bear to Mr. Tomison'."

²L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie de Nord-Ouest*; (Autobiographical notes of MacDonald of Garth, 1794):

"It having been found that the Indian hunting grounds were too distant, and also that one establishment was not enough for the many tribes who met there and sometimes quarrelled, Mr. Hughes was ordered about two hundred miles further up the river to commence another Fort, or settlement, which was named Fort Augustus."

³L. R. Masson, *Ibid*:

"My grand uncle, General Small, and the late Simon McTavish, head partner of the old North-West Company in London, and with my brother Angus, of Pall Mall, bound me as a clerk to that Company for a definite number of years at the end of that my service, I was to get a share in the concern. On the 19th of April 1791, I sailed from Greenock in the good ship 'Canada', Captain Harvey, master. . . . I was a good looking lad of seventeen years old and I soon became a favourite—in those days a passage of six weeks was considered good. We got to Quebec the first of June."

MacDonald was afflicted with a withered arm which disqualified him for the army in his native Scotland. (The Author).

⁴A long island lies in the Saskatchewan River across from the historic spot of these old forts of 1794-1807. It is now known vicariously as the "Fort" Island. (The Author).

⁵C. Parnell, *The Beaver*, September 1945; (Founding Fort Edmonton):

"In 1794, Angus Shaw of the North-West Company heard that the region around the confluence of those two rivers was 'a rich and plentiful country, abounding in all kinds of animals, especially beavers and otters, which are said to be so numerous that the women and children kill them with sticks and hatchets'. Next summer, therefore, he erected a trading post, Fort Augustus, on the north bank of the Saskatchewan, about a mile and a half west of the Sturgeon."

⁶The Sturgeon River is the one here referred to. It flows into the Saskatchewan River a mile and a half east of old Fort Edmonton from a northwesterly direction. (The Author).

⁷*Hudson's Bay factor's diary*; Extracts (October 15, 1854):

"Alexis and Galerneau, Abraham and James Richards arrived with eleven loaded horses of fish from Lac St. Annes."

⁸Sturges, *Edmonton, Past and Present*; (London, England):

"Although no documentary evidence exists as to the naming of Edmonton, Alberta, it

seems most probable that it was so named by Wm. Tomison, who selected the site for the Hudson's Bay Company on October 5th, 1795, and who apparently followed the usual practice of that time, which was to name a new trading post either after a member of the company's committee or after the place of residence of such a member. In 1795 the deputy governor of the Company was Sir James Winter Lake, Bt., F.R.S., who resided at Edmonton, Middlesex (at a house called 'The Firs' which stood to the west of the south end of 'Firs Lane')."

⁹ *Journal of Voyages and Travels of Daniel William Harmon*; (The Courier Press, April, 1800):

"The men among the Indians are very subject to be jealous of their wives. In their fits of jealousy, they . . . not frequently cut off their noses and should they not in the moment of passion have a knife at hand, they will snap it off at one bite of their teeth."

CHAPTER II.

¹MSS from Alberta Provincial Library Archives, as related to K. Hughes by Margaret Fraser, daughter of Colin Fraser:

"William Rowland was the interpreter in 1852-4, whilst the Frasers were there." (In Fort Edmonton.)

²Morice, *History of the Catholic Church*; p. 166:

"A French halfbreed, named Picher, took the trouble to come down to the Red River from Edmonton to ask that a Catholic missionary be sent to that distant post. In the following year Father Thibault was sent thither, and after spending a week at Fort Carlton en route, arrived in Edmonton, June 19, 1842. This priest was evidently the first one of his church to pursue continuous missionary work among the Indians of Alberta."

³A. S. Morton, *Under Western Skies*:

"Peter Pond was the second European, William Stewart of the Hudson's Bay Company (1715) being the first, to cross the height of land into what proved to be the greatest fur field of the North West. He passed down the Clearwater River to the spot at which Fort McMurray afterwards was built, whence he followed the Athabasca River to within forty miles of the Lake of that name. There . . . Pond built what came to be called 'the old Establishment' . . . He was endowed with great intellectual vision, but his life was marred by a fractious temper, which implicated him more or less in two murders . . . He was ill educated, but was gifted with brains . . . Here is an example of his literary style: 'I was born in MILFORD in the county of New Haven, Conn. the 18 day of Jan'y. 1740 and lived there under the Government and protection of my parans till the year '56 . . . Being then 16 yrs of age I gave my Parans to understand that I had a Strong Desire to be a Solge.'

After serving in the war which ended in the surrender of Canada to Britain, Pond devoted himself to fur trade. . . . In 1775 he entered our Northwest."

⁴From the mss. of Mr. Frank Walker, *Rush on the Overland Trail*; "Reminiscences of the Klondyke":

"On the way up we caught up with a party from Colorado, who were camped beside a huge copper ledge, as near as I can remember, about fifty miles above Fort Graham. The trail passed right over this. They remarked that if it was near transportation, it was immensely valuable."

⁵Tokens of copper alloy, the size of a Canadian penny were issued by Hudson's Bay Company as trade money. There were coins of one beaver and two beaver value. (The Author).

⁶Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe*; p. 47:

"This official residence of the Chief Factor was a massive building of squared timber, about seventy feet deep and sixty wide, three stories high and with a gallery opening from the second story in front and rear. . . . This was 'Rowand's Folly', as the gentlemen adventurers were wont to call the most pretentious house of the Company west of York Factory. It had already stood about thirty years, being built by Chief Factor Rowand after the Union, when he was given control of the united trading posts of the Beaver district."

⁷L. R. Masson, *The Oregon Missions*; from Father De Smet's letters, dated April 16, 1840:

"John Rowand was a native of Dublin, Ireland, (born about 1775-1780) came to Canada in early youth, and soon entered services of the Northwest Company. In 1804, Clerk at Fort des Prairies, or Edmonton, and at the time of fusion of Companies (1821) he became Chief Trader in the combined Corporation, being advanced in 1825 to the much coveted rank of Chief Factor. He died suddenly (1854) at Fort Pitt where his eldest son, John, commanded. His bones were afterwards taken to Montreal where they were buried in the Catholic cemetery."

"Chief Factor Rowand was a typical trader, a miniature emperor who possessed the impetuosity of the Irish in an exaggerated degree. He zealously guarded the privileges of his corporation, and, though by no means a big man he managed to make himself respected by whites and feared by the Indians."

McLean's Notes, (Champlain Society):

"John Rowan was the son of Dr. Rowan, assistant surgeon of the Montreal General Hospital in early days of British rule in Canada. He married an Indian girl who saved his life when he was thrown from his horse in the early days in the west, and by her had several children. One son entered the service, another was educated at Edinburgh University and became a successful physician in Quebec."

⁹J. Storer Clouston, *Orkney and the Hudson's Bay Company*; (Quoting Rev. W. Clouston, *The Beaver Outfit*, 267-4):

"This Company fits out three ships from 150 to 400 tons each, which carry out provisions, guns, powder, shot, hatchets, cloths, etc. to be exchanged with the Indians for beaver and other furs. These vessels usually arrive at the harbour of Stromness about the first of June, where they stop for two or three weeks to take aboard men for their settlements. They have about 400 to 500 men in these settlements, of whom it is presumed three-fourths are Orkneys, as they find them more sober and tractable than the Irish and they engage for lower wages than either the English or Irish."

¹⁰C. S. Ellis, *Canadian Geographic Journal*:

"Prior to the union in 1821 the North West Company favoured the use of canoes, whereas the Hudson's Bay Company favored the use of boats. Following the union the use of boats became general."

¹¹Sir William Schooling, K.B.E., H. B. Company *Life in the Service*:

"During the rivalry with the Nor'-Westers the Company supplied alcohol to the Indians; but, as a result of a revolting brawl witnessed by Governor Simpson an order was issued that no strong drink should be supplied."

(The regale was gratuitous offering of spirituous drinks at times of trading or festivities.)

¹²Champlain Society, *The Hargreave Letters*:

"Fort des Prairies' was a generic term applied to various different establishments, such as Forts Vermilion, George and Augustus. At the latter Fort, as late as 1834, Chief Factor Rowand headed a letter of January 11th: 'Fort des Prairies', sometimes abbreviating it 'F. D. P.'"

¹³From the diary of Rev. Father Lacombe, O.M.I.; (Archives Provinciales-Edmonton):

"enfin le 19 septembre après-midi, nous abordions au pied du Fort Edmonton, où la brigade était attendue avec grande impatience. Métis (les femmes surtout) et les sauvages couvraient le rivage et les côtes pour saluer notre arrivée. Le pavillon anglais aux armes de l'honorable Compagnie (pro pelle cutem) flottait sur un des bastions. Le canon et les détonations annonçaient aux environs qu'il y avait encore du tabac, de la munition et du butin pour un an."

¹⁴*Ibid*:

"De temps en temps, pendant cet ennuyeux et pénible voyage, un certain excitement se produisait par l'apparition soudaine d'une bête sauvage qui débouchait sur la rivière, venant se désaltérer et essayant de traverser: un ours, un cerf, un orignal et même quelques buffalos. Très rarement nous avions la chance d'abattre quelques-unes de ces bêtes. C'était un grand soulagement pour faire un changement à la nourriture insipide du pimican, quoique très soutenante."

¹⁵C. Parnell, *The Beaver-Outfit* 276, Sept. 1945; (Founding Fort Edmonton):

"Next month will see the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Edmonton House, the Hudson's Bay fort which eventually developed into Edmonton, capital of Alberta. The original fort was not built, however, on the site of the present city, but some twenty miles down stream near the junction of the Tea or Sturgeon River with the North Saskatchewan."

"All we can be sure of, from the records now available, is that the post was moved from its original location to the site of the future city sometime between September, 1801—when David Thompson visited Fort Augustus—and September, 1806—when the earliest journal of Edmonton House now extant commences."

"This second Edmonton, together with Fort Augustus (No. 2) was closed in 1810 and moved many miles down stream to the forks of the North Saskatchewan and White Earth Rivers, near the present Pagan, Alberta. But only three years later, they were both moved back again. There they continued to do business, side by side, until the union of 1821 brought the rival companies together, and Fort Augustus was abandoned."

¹⁶From *Journal* of the Rev. Robt. Rundle, missionary to Fort Edmonton, 1840-48:

"March 26, 1841: 'Wrote a verse for the first time in Cree.' August 21, 1843: 'I succeeded in getting the Apostles' Creed translated into Assiniboine.'"

¹⁴ *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collection*, Vol. 99, No. 1:

"Paul Kane (1810-1871) was one of Canada's earliest painters and a romantic figure in Canadian art. He was born in Mallow, County Cork, Ireland, and came to 'Muddy York' (Toronto) in 1819. He came west in 1845—Paul Kane did not depart from Fort Edmonton to return East until May 25th, 1848. . . . He was assisted on his journey to the Pacific by Sir George Simpson, from whom he received letters to the Factors of all the Posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, as well as a commission to paint twelve pictures of aboriginal life in the west."

¹⁷ Meat of the buffalo was cut in slices, dried and pounded; and with this was mixed half as much melted fat. This was put into a bag made of buffalo hide. Sometimes berries, such as saskatoons or cranberries, were added and also sugar. Pemican was used a great deal on the trail, either raw or cooked, each person being allowed two pounds a day.—(The Author).

¹⁸ Champlain Society, *Hargreave Letters*; page 135:

"John Peter Pruden entered Hudson's Bay Company in 1791, became Chief Trader in 1821 and Chief Factor at Carlton House, 1836—retired, 1837."

¹⁹ John Blue, *Alberta, Past and Present*:

"The dog trains were used in winter to bring furs from the outlying posts to the central depots and also for winter express—the dog in the north was to a great extent what the camel is in the desert."

²⁰ Provincial Archives; (notes of Katherine Hughes, Archivist). Mrs. Hardisty—*Routine at Edmonton House, Fort Edmonton, Fort Augustus or Fort des Prairies*:

"Bell rang not only for rations as at some posts in modern times, but at the following hours: at 5 or 6 o'clock according to season for rising; at 7 o'clock for breakfast; 12 o'clock and 1 o'clock for luncheon; and 6 o'clock for dinner for officers and gentlemen; at dusk the gates closed, usually at 7 in winter and at 9 in summer. During Hardisty's regime Malcolm Groat, the steward or quartermaster, used to ring the bell and he would deal out the rations. He always raised the flag on Sundays and holidays as a sign of 'no trading' and on the arrival of superior officers."

²¹ Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company*:

"When the brigades were at York in summer the nights glittered with hundreds of camp fires along the shore where the voyageurs gambled, sang and fought . . . in the officers' mess and bachelors' hall where the apprentice clerks gathered under the yellow lantern light, there were long tales of year's adventures, of solitary travel, of buffalo hunts, and of homes across the sea."

²² The English Hawthorn Tree here referred to is still (1946) to be found growing near the original site of Edmonton House. This is on the river flat of Lord Rodney's farm close to the town of Fort Saskatchewan. Rubblestones, found there in the cellars of old Fort Augustus were utilized for the building of a cairn above the flat in 1927, to mark the place of the two demolished forts. It is conjectured that Edmonton House, the Hudson's Bay Company Building, lay east of 'Augustus', North West Company building, on the river flat. (The Author).

²³ On the west bank of the river "Lea", seven and a half miles north of London Bridge, beside the old "North Road" between Tottenham and Enfield, lies the town of Edmonton, England. There is an upper and lower Edmonton. The celebrated Enfield rifles are made in the Royal Small Arms factory near there. A Sanctus bell rings curfew from "All Saints" Church. (The Author).

²⁴ Cowper, *John Gilpin*:

"Thus all through Merry Islington
These gambols did he play,
Until he came into the wash
Of Edmonton, so gay."

²⁵ Robinson, *The Great Fur Land*:

"A clerk in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in a great majority of instances must remain a simple clerk for a term of fourteen years before he is considered in line of promotion."

²⁶ Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe*:

"Of the boatmen's toil, Father Lacombe has written: 'Imagine, if you please, after resting for a few hours on the bare earth, to hear at three o'clock the cry, "Level! Level! Et puis burrah!"—To pull and pull on the lines drawing the heavy boat up against the current, and walking in the mud, the rocks, the swamp, along cliffs and sometimes

in water to their armpits—and this under a burning sun or beating rain from early morning until darkness fell, about nine o'clock.' "

²⁷*Ibid*:

"From the front gallery (of Rowand's Folly) a high stairway led down to the grassy courtyard about which the Bachelors' Hall or gentlemen's quarters, the Indian Hall, the men's quarters and warehouses were ranged."

²⁸Paul Kane, (Diary of 1848); *Wanderings of an Artist*:

"Another lady with whom I sported the light fantastic toe, whose poetic name was Cun-ne-wa-bum, or 'One that looks at the stars', was a half-breed Cree girl; and I was so struck by her beauty that I prevailed upon her to promise to sit for her likeness, which she afterwards did with great patience, holding her fan, which was made of the tip end of swan's wing with an ornamental handle of porcupine's quills, in a most coquettish manner."

²⁹*Journal of Hudson's Bay Company Factor*, October 9th, 1854:

"Cold, cloudy—mountain boats started with great reluctance on account of lateness of season."

³⁰Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*:

"After some difficulty, I succeeded in getting a young girl to sit in the costume of her tribe, although her mother was very much afraid it might shorten her life."

³¹In the Cree language—"I go now". (The Author).

³²Rev. Father de Smet, *The Oregon Missions*; (Letter dated April 16th, 1846):

"Monseigneur: Fort Edmonton or Augustus is the great emporium of the Hudson's Bay Company in the districts of upper Saskatchewan and Athabasca; Forts Jasper, Assiniboine, Little Slave Lake, on the river Athabasca; Forts des Montagnes, Pitt, Carleton (Carlton), Cumberland, on the Saskatchewan; depend on it.

CHAPTER III.

¹Malcolm Groat was engaged by the Hudson's Bay Company as a steward for Fort Edmonton under Chief Factor William Christie in 1862. He had a room on the ground floor of the big house 'Rowand's Folly', built by John Rowand. Malcolm Groat was born in Edinburgh in 1836—a descendant of John O'Groat.—(The Author).

²John MacDougall, *Red River Rebellion*:

"At the end of March, 1860, there came the dire news of the killing of Maskepetoon and his sons by Blackfeet."

³From the Daily Journal of the Hudson's Bay Factor, Fort Edmonton, November 25th, 1855:

"Finlay M—— and Jane D—— were married by the Rev. Thomas Woolsley, having lived together as man and wife nine years previous."

⁴*Ibid.*, December 25th, 1855:

"John Martin, cattleboy, neglected milking cows—ought to be reprimanded."

*⁵*Alberta Provincial Archives* (letter to Miss K. Hughes):

"Mountain Mile, Sept. 15th, 1910.

Dear Miss Huglie,

As I promist to tell you what I know about the Death of Chife facttour Mr. J. Rowand, I was not at Fort Pitt when he dide I was at Edmonton I was left thare to go to the landan to build tow boats for the lesser Slave Lake. The boats started for York about 20th. of May 1854 with Mr. Rowand aborde they arrived at fort pitt in about six days his son was in charge of the fort that winter when the men of the tow forts met thare was a fite a man named Baptiste Paul of Edmonton with another belonging to fort pitt and mr. Rowand got mad with paul he went out on the platforme cursing and foming at the mouth he fell and when they lifted him he was dead. The boats had to leve the same day so they buried him that same day his son Mr. John we called him was going to kill Paul so he made off with his wife and boy. The boy was about six years old so it was sade that John got a man the name of Louison Lamontie to follow him thay ware coming back to Edmonton on the north side of the river when thay came to vermilion river the river was high so Paul went in the bush to cut timber to make a raft the outhter man took his gun saying he was going to hunt and he shot Paul he sayed he thought it was a bear but it was sayed that his sone paid him for the killing. Well the next spring thay ware tolded to dig up the body and send the bones to St. Boniface on red river so thay got an indian to dig it up and boil the flesh of it was sayed that the wemmen of the fort made soap with the fat of the pot, I know that thure was some of the teath found a long time after the indian was drunk all the time he was boiling it. Well the bones was put in a box and sent down the river thare was a big storm in crossing lake Winnipeg and it was sayed that the men trobed the box overboard to stop the storm but I did not belive that I think it got to Red River all right and was buried thare however thare is a monument for him thare anyway if he went into the lake it was sayed that when the indian dug up the body it was found turned up side down thare was not a man at boath forts that done any crying for him everybody was glad. No more I remain

Yours

W. S. G. Gladstone."

⁶Father Lacombe's Diary, dated 1860:

"Mon fidèle Alexis . . . Il est né près du Lac la Biche en 1830, d'une bonne famille chrétienne, moitié métisse, moitié sauvage Cris, qui s'appelait Cardinal. Tout jeune-homme encore il se rendit à Edmonton pour y trouver de quoi travailler. C'est là que je le rencontrai en 1850, où il était engagé à la Compagnie. Je le mariai à une fille crise. Bientôt cette femme séduite par un misérable Cri, s'en alla avec son séducteur. Alexis laissa sa position et se donna à moi, sans engagement, comme un de mes frères convers, quoiqu'il n'a jamais appartenu à notre Congrégation."

⁷*Ibid.*: dated 1861; (page 123):

"C'est Mgr. Taché qui parle: Qu'on nous permette aussi un mot de reconnaissance à l'adresse de Mr. J. W. Christie, agent de l'honorable Compagnie dans cette importante et belle partie du pays. Depuis son arrivée à Edmonton ce monsieur n'avait cessé de donner à nos missionnaires les marques les plus ostensibles de respect et d'attachement. Pour leur facilité et leur satisfaction il avait fait construire gratuitement, à l'intérieur de son fort une jolie petite église, à laquelle est adjointe une résidence commode pour les pères."

⁸*Ibid.*:

"Pendant mes courses d'Edmonton à Ste Anne, quand j'arrêtais mes chiens un instant sur la butte, je me disais: 'Quelle belle place pour une mission!' C'est donc là que j'avais conduit Mgr. Taché. Pendant que nous jetions les yeux de tous côtés en

dégustant un délicieux morceau de pémican, Mgr. me dit: 'Père Lacombe, en effet, la position est magnifique, je la choisis pour la nouvelle mission, mais je veux qu'elle s'appelle St. Albert, en l'honneur de votre bien-aimé patron.'

¹⁷*Ibid* dated 1866:

"A mesure qu'ils approchaient nous pouvions les reconnaître pour des Cris avec une femme au milieu d'eux . . . On raconte le récit de la bataille avec les détails. Pendant ce temps la prisonnière qui me reconnaît s'échappe des mains de celui qui l'a saisie et vient tomber à ses pieds. Elle pleure, elle supplie, elle emploie mon secours. Après un moment le silence je m'adresse aux guerriers et surtout à celui qui est le maître de la jeune captive . . . Je fis un grand discours devant les vieillards du camp et les guerriers. Je leur représentai que ce n'était pas pour moi que je demandais cette femme, mais pour la remettre à ses parents; que j'étais prêt à la payer . . . Après de longs pourparlers enfin on me délivra la prisonnière moyennant que je donne au maître un cheval un fusil et des habits . . . je la donnai aux sœurs de charité qui l'adoptèrent avec la plus grande bienveillance. Pendant l'hiver elle travailla fidèlement, s'attacha aux sœurs qui l'estimaient beaucoup . . . Et Marguerite s'élance et vient tomber dans les bras de ses père et mère, que j'ai fait presque mourir de joie."

¹⁸The Earl of Southesk, K.T., F.R.G.S., *Saskatchewan and Rocky Mountains*; Aug. 1859:

"It was yet early in the day when we found ourselves looking down on the broad stream of the Saskatchewan River, from the summits of a high steep bank directly opposite to Fort Edmonton. My men advanced and saluted the Fort with a general volley from their guns and rifles. . . . A summons promptly answered by the despatch of a boat which in a short while ferried us across to the northern shore. . . . The Fort, externally an oblong palisaded inclosure with flanking towers at the corners, at once struck me as being considerably larger than Fort Carlton, the buildings comprised within its limits being likewise more important both in size and character. Immediately in front of the principal gateway the ground fell suddenly in a deep and almost precipitous descent to the river, which at this part seemed to carry a great body of water, with an apparent width of about 250 yards. Upstream the view was exceedingly pretty for the elevated banks which confined the channel were picturesquely broken, and richly covered with an abundant growth of wood."

"From each side of the enclosure there dropped a sudden slope to level plateaus, near the river-side, the eastmost of which was under cultivation as an arable farm. They were cutting wheat at the time. It seemed a poorish crop, but I did not very closely examine it, and perhaps there was better grain elsewhere. A windmill placed upon the higher ground at the back of the Fort betokened a certain amount of agricultural business in the district."

¹⁹Milton and Cheadle, *The Northwest Passage*:

In this habit of howling in chorus the Indian dogs present another point of likeness to wolves which they so closely resemble in outward form. One of the pack commences with short barks, and the others gradually join in, and all howl with might and main for about five minutes. Then they cease gradually as they began and all is quiet again."

²⁰Katherine Hughes, *Provincial Archives*; (As related by Mrs. Joe MacDonald):

" . . . the big house built by John Rowand which had so many windows and so large, made of panes 7 1/2 x 8 1/2 or 7 x 8 that one hail storm broke between 200 or 300 panes of glass. At this time the windows of the store and Indian House were made of parchment."

²¹Paul Kane (1848), *The Wanderings of an Artist*:

"The dining-hall in which we assembled was the largest room in the fort, probably about fifty by twenty-five feet, well warmed by large fires, which are scarcely ever allowed to go out. The walls and ceilings are boarded, as plastering is not used, there being no limestone within reach; but these boards are painted in a style of the most startling barbaric gaudiness, and the ceiling filled with centre-pieces of fantastic gilt scrolls, making altogether a saloon which no white men would enter for the first time without a start, and which the Indians always looked upon with awe and wonder."

²²Katherine Hughes, *Provincial Archives*; (Testimonial of John Norris):

"Longmore was in command at Edmonton once. He married a Cree woman who was 'Gawny Saskatchewan'. She died at Onion Lake, Sask., in 1909, over one hundred years old. Her son, Johnny Saskatchewan (Longmore), was a noted hunter."

²³Rev. Father P. Duchaussois, O.M.I., *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*; page 47 and 278:

"On September 24, 1859, Sisters Emery, Lamy and Alphonsus arrived at Lac St. Anne. In 1863 they were transferred to St. Albert. The half-breeds were numerous at Lake St. Anne, but the ground thereabouts, was boggy, and not very suitable for cultivation, and besides, it was too far from the Blackfeet Indians, who at that time were coming

into the Church. Being at Lake St. Anne in 1860, Mgr. Tache, one day, bound on his snowshoes and set off with Father Lacombe to look for a better site. Forty mules east of the lake, he planted his staff in the snow, on a rising ground above the Sturgeon River, and said, 'Let the new Mission be here'. And he called it after Father Lacombe's Patron, Saint Albert."

- ¹⁶ Sir William Francis Butler, K.C.B., *The Great Lone Land*:

"That rough flint gun, which might have done duty in the days of the Stuarts and is bartered for skins, whose bent barrel the Indians will often straighten between the cleft tree, or the crevice of a rock; has been made precious by the long labour of many men; by the trackless wastes through which it has been carried, by the winter famine of those who have to vend it, by the years which elapse between the departure from the work shop and the return of that sable or silver fox for which it has been bartered."

- ✓ ¹⁷ H. J. Moberly and W. B. Cameron, *When Fur Was King*:

"In the evening the chief factor gave a dance in the big house, the belle of the ball being a Blackfoot woman who had been left in the fall to the care of his wife, Mrs. William Sinclair. She was tall and very fair, with a splendid figure and wore a gown loaned for the occasion by our chief's daughter. She probably was the offspring of some unfortunate white woman, captured and brought up by the Indians."

- ¹⁸ Factor Rowand frequently impressed the Indians with his magic powers by dropping a Seidlitz Powder into a glass of water.—(The Author).

- ¹⁹ Katherine Hughes, *Provincial Archives*: (As related by Margaret Fraser [Mrs. Joseph MacDonald] and daughter of Colin Fraser):

"Colin Fraser used to come from Lac Ste. Anne to spend his Christmas holidays at the Fort, bringing his wife and two little girls with him. Promptly at midnight at New Year's, Colin arrayed in his kilts and Fraser tartan would walk up and down the verandah of the Big House (on the east side—the front) playing many Scotch airs. . . . He would play 'The Flowers of Edinburgh', 'Lord MacDonald's Reel', 'Lady Mary Ramsay's Strathspey'."

- ²⁰ Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*; page 98:

"A Highlander, of the name of Colin Fraser, had joined our party. He was on his way to a small post (Jasper) of which he had the charge, at the head of the Athabasca River in the Rocky Mountains, where he had resided for the last eleven years. He had been brought to the country by Sir George Simpson, in the capacity of his piper, at the time when he explored Fraser's River. . . . He carried the pipes with him, dressed in his Highland costume; and when stopping at forts, or wherever he found Indians, the bagpipes were put in requisition, much to the astonishment of the natives, who supposed him to be a relation of the Great Spirit."

- ²¹ Missionaries de Marie Immaculee, *Archives Provinciales*; Edmonton, B. 749:

"Feb. 24, 1853: We, the undersigned priest, have baptized Mathias Collin, born today, son of Richard Collin and Genevieve Bruyeres—God Mother, Cecile Kalliou. "Sig., Jos. Bourassa, priest."

- ²² Richard Collin, known as "Muchias", a dwarf Metis, was a familiar figure at Fort Edmonton, as water and wood carrier. He served in this way at the fort until the late 80's, after which he became an employee of John Walter, lumberman. His tiny house, with furnishings built to fit his diminutive proportions, still stands (1946) beside the river on the Walterdale Flats.—(The Author).

- ²³ Rev. Robert Terrill Rundle, *The Daily Journal*; Fort Edmonton (1840-1848):

"January 1st, 1847: New Year's Day! A day of holiday and rejoicing and revelry. Some of the Indians were drunk. Almost a blank for me."
"January 2nd, 1847: Two services not well attended—drunkenness at the Fort, also fighting and dancing—such is Edmonton."

- ²⁴ Dr. John Maclean, *The Beaver*, December 1925; James Evans (1801-1846):

"In the spring of 1840—four missionaries were sent and stationed as follows: Robert Terrill Rundle at Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House . . . and James Evans at Norway House."

"His (James Evans) first winter was spent in Hudson's Bay Fort studying the Cree language—in June 1841, less than a year after his arrival he wrote: 'men, women, children read it with ease and fluency.' So simple is the system that less than fifty characters cover the whole Cree language. A white man can master them in an hour, an intelligent Cree can use them readily in a week in reading any book. . . . By a critical study of the Ojibway he discovered that eight consonants and four vowels would represent the whole language, and he sought to express all the words by means of a syllabic system."

From these Rev. Father Morrice in 1885 invented a syllabary for the natives of Stuart Lake."

- ²⁵Geographic Board of Canada, *Place Names of Alberta*:

"Jasper Lake, national park and village; after Jasper Hawes, who was in charge of the North West Co.'s trading post of same name on the west side of Brule lake in 1817. The post was in existence in 1814 when Francois Decoigne was in charge; later, the post was removed to the shore of present Jasper Lake."

- ²⁶Katherine Hughes, *Provincial Archives*; (As related by Margaret Fraser [Mrs. Joseph MacDonald]):

"Factor Rowand's place was filled during his absence at council or on trips by Harriot. . . . Harriot's first wife, a Metis woman, had lost her reason up at Jasper House where they were stationed when her first child, a daughter, was born. She roamed about in the woods around the Miette River, was lost and was never found. Her infant was bro't up on mare's milk."

- ²⁷Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*; page 276:

"We sat up very late talking to the chief . . . he began talking about the efforts of missionaries amongst his people, and seemed to think that they would not be very successful; for though he did not interfere with the religious belief of any of his tribe, yet many thought as he did; and his idea was, that as Mr. Rundie (Methodist) had told him that what he preached was the only true road to heaven, and Mr. Hunter (Church of England) told him the same thing, and so did Father Thibault, and as they all three said that the other two were wrong, and as he did not know which was right, he thought they ought to call a council among themselves, and that then he would go with them all three, but that *until they agreed, he would wait*."

- ²⁸Daniel William Harmon, *Journal of Voyages and Travels*:

"There is an old Sauteux woman here, who compels her own son to have criminal intercourse with her."

- ²⁹Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*; page 94:

"After relating various stories of his war and hunting exploits, he, (Potika-poo-tis) to my great astonishment, told me he had killed his own mother. It appears that, while travelling, she told him that she felt too old and feeble to sustain the hardships of life, and too lame to travel any further, and asked him to take pity on her, and end her misery, on which he unhesitatingly shot her on the spot. . . . She died instantly, and I cried at first; but after I had buried her, the impression wore off."

CHAPTER IV.

¹ John Maclean, D.D.; *McDougall of Alberta*:

"Many of the natives flocked to the trading posts and mission stations for relief, some drank whiskey almost boiling hot, while others in their agony rushed into the cold waters of the rivers, many breaking the ice in their desperation. Strange to say, some of them survived."

² *Ibid*:

"On one of the steamboats plying between St. Louis and Benton on the Missouri River, smallpox had broken out among the white men. Their discarded garments having been secured by some Indians, the disease was introduced among the Blackfeet, spreading northward over the plains, until thousands were stricken, and the land for several hundred miles was a sepulchre of desolation. Far and wide the smallpox travelled, attacking the Cree, Stoney and Sarcee Indians, the plains hunters, half-breeds, Hudson's Bay Company's employees, as well as the missionaries and their families."

³ Annie Walter (Mrs. John Walter) told the author that her husband, known as "Honest John" in the early days, had come to Fort Edmonton in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870.

⁴ (1945) As told to the author by Mrs. Harrison Young ("Libby McDougall", daughter of Rev. George McDougall):

"We had a big building 'bee' when the church was raised. Mother prepared a picnic lunch which she spread upon a large white tablecloth upon the grass. Every available help was given to father and brother John by Hudson's Bay Company men at the fort to build our church."

⁵ John McDougall, *George Millward McDougall*; page 165; (Extract from letter November 22nd, 1870 by George McDougall):

"We have also the prospect of a monthly mail next summer (1871), and this will be a grand advance when compared with one express in the year."

⁶ *Ibid*; page 179:

"In the spring of 1871 father began a mission at Edmonton. For a long time Edmonton had stood on the list of stations in connection with a Methodist Church. This simply meant that it was, in a way, the headquarters of the evangelist missionaries, Rundle and Woolsey, who had been the guests, when at home, of the Hudson's Bay Company."—"... as Edmonton was the head of the district, and the mercantile depot for the whole country, and was on every hand beginning to attract settlement, it was thought by the District Meeting that this post should be taken up and the Chairman, himself, was the best man to do it."

⁷ Related to the author by Mrs. Harrison Young (nee Libby McDougall):

"The year of 1870 stands out very clearly in my memory. That was the year of the small-pox epidemic. It took two of my sisters, Georgina, who was next older to me, and Flora, who was my younger sister. My sister-in-law also died of the small-pox then. She was the wife of my eldest brother, John, and her death came when he was away from home on one of his missions. The three graves of my sisters are in our garden at Victoria mission."

⁸ Though it is commonly stated that Edmonton was incorporated as a village in 1871, no official record has been found to make this allegation authentic. An intensive search was made by the author at Ottawa, Regina and North Battleford without obtaining further data regarding Edmonton's incorporation as a village.—(The Author).

⁹ Related to the author by Mrs. Harrison Young (nee Libby McDougall):

"I remember when a York boat brigade stopped at our Mission at Victoria on its way to Edmonton. There were a number of Orkney lads who had not been in this country before—among them John Walter the boat builder. Father and Mr. Hardisty used to teach them and they used to sing hymns after the accompaniment of our organ. They loved to sing."

¹⁰ John MacLean, D.D., *McDougall of Alberta*; page 118:

"There were tears in the eyes of the people at the mission when they heard for the first time the strains of music from the small organ which George McDougall purchased in Winnipeg and brought out for the Sunday School at Edmonton in 1871. It had been made in England for the Anglican Bishop of Ruperts Land, and when transported with much difficulty across the plains was the first musical instrument in the far west."

CHAPTER V.

¹*Edmonton Daily Bulletin*—Christmas, 1907; (Recounting Early Days):

"Mr. Hardisty had only lived in the old house (Rowand's Folly) a couple of years when he perceived the necessity of rebuilding. The building was visibly, painfully ageing.

"So in the early autumn of 1874 the carpenters of the Company set to work preparing timber for a new residence which Mr. Hardisty chose should be built outside the palisades and at a higher point on the upland. All the timber, obtained from the Saskatchewan forests near about, was hand-sawn. The men worked with a will on the structure, weather-boarding it, building a verandah and balcony and in the following spring the Big House stood ready for the family of the Chief Factor.

"Bit by bit the huge loosening timbers of Rowand's Folly were pulled down and the house razed to the ground. The country round about was opening up for settlement; there was no longer need for the lofty palisaded wall with a gallery inside for the sentry and strong bastions at each corner for defence. These were allowed to fall into decay and were replaced by a high board fence."

²Sir Cecil Denny, *The Law Marches West*; J. M. Dent & Sons; page 10:

"The first North West Mounted Police uniform consisted of red tunic, black breeches with two white stripes, forage cap and helmet, high black leather boots, heavy dark blue overcoat with cape, belt with revolver and cartridge pouch, and Snider carbine. The trouser stripes were afterwards changed to red, and later again to yellow, as at present.

³J. P. Turner, R.C.M.P. Historical Research Department, Justice Building, Ottawa:

"*The North West Mounted Police* existed from 1873 to 1904; the *Royal North West Mounted Police* from 1904 to 1920; the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police* from 1920 to the present." (1946).

⁴Sir Cecil Denny, *The Law Marches West*; page 23:

"On 28th July we arrived at Roche Perce. . . . At Roche Perce, two hundred and seventy miles from Dufferin, we made a long halt, and 'A' troop in command of Inspector Jarvis, with sub-inspector Gagnon as subaltern, was detailed to proceed via Fort Ellice, Fort Pitt, and Carlton to Edmonton. S. B. Steele was sergeant-major with this troop, which took with it fifty-five of the weakest horses, twenty-four wagons, fifty-five carts, sixty-two oxen and fifty cows and calves. Sub-Inspector Shurtliff and twelve half-breeds also accompanied the party. . . . They arrived on 27th October after a most difficult journey between Carlton and Edmonton, eighty-eight days (including stoppages) from Roche Perce."

⁵R. G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains*; page 54:

"Pasture was poor, water was scarce . . . when the weather began to get cold the weakened horses often had to be lifted in the morning and their joints rubbed, before they could proceed on the journey. During the last twenty-five miles it seemed as if the enterprise would collapse near the goal, as the cold had so stiffened the half-starved horses that they could not travel over the hard-frozen icy ground. They had to be lifted and rubbed hour by hour. . . . Constable Labelle is especially singled out for mention by Inspector Jarvis, because of his special attention to the horses which were pulled through largely by his assiduous care."

⁶Thomas Hale, *Complete Body of Husbandry*, 1760; (From an old English treatise on Veterinary Science):

"When a horse has been inconsiderately rode or worked; and no right care taken to recruit Nature by good food or rest, he will be jaded, poor, dispirited, and ill looking; and in wrong hands may be utterly lost or spoiled. In this case he will not eat at all, or when he is brought to that, his food will do him little service. In this exigence recourse must be had to medicines, before he will have any benefit from his provender. . . . To answer this purpose, is the following drench—Mix in half a pint of white wine, half an ounce of Venice Treacle, half a dram of Powder of Saffron—he will recruit in strength and spirit during the night and in the morning will eat freely and heartily."

⁷R. G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains*; page 45:

"Commissioner French lost no time in getting his men into shape at the rendezvous (Roche Perce) . . . He arranged the night camp with the Eastern horses inside a zariba of wagons. . . . The occasion of the Stampede that took place was a terrific

thunderstorm, which transformed the prairie into a sea of electric flame and sent bolts crashing into the zariba amidst the horses that were tied to the wagons. . . . Terrified, they broke their fastenings, and made for the side of the corral. The six men on guard were tramped under foot as they tried to stop them. The maddened beasts overturned the huge wagons, dashed through a row of tents scattering everything, and made for the gate . . . in their mad efforts to pass they climbed over one another to the height of many feet. . . . Inspector (now Colonel) James Walker, leaped on a passing horse and went out with them into the night.

**Ibid*:

"He pursued the frightened animals for some 50 miles across the boundary, and helped to round them up and bring them back, twenty-four hours after they had stampeded."

*Sir Cecil Denny, *The Law Marches West*:

"The first contingent was sent in the fall of 1873, via the 'Dawson Route' to Winnipeg, Manitoba, and stationed at Lower Fort Garry, to remain until the following spring, when the remainder of the Force, which would be recruited during the winter in Toronto, would join them and bring up all transport supplies, etc., required for the arduous journey to be taken into the unknown West. . . . It may be of interest to many who are acquainted with Major General Griesbach, of Edmonton, to know that the first man to enlist in the first one hundred and fifty men of the original North West Mounted Police in 1873 was A. H. Griesbach, his father, who had served previously in the 15th Hussars and Cape Mounted Rifles."

*R. G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains*:

"The Dawson Route, so-called after the designer of it, was a trail which utilized the water-stretches and on the whole was more suited to the amphibious animals than human beings.

"The Police . . . duly landed at lower Fort Garry, the old Hudson's Bay post still romantically standing on the banks of the Red River some 20 miles north of the present city of Winnipeg. They came in three troops or divisions 'A', 'B', and 'C' of fifty men each, which was the number of the Force which the law-makers at Ottawa thought would be sufficient to patrol 300,000 square miles of territory where lawlessness was beginning to be rampant."

*G. F. G. Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*; page 199:

"In 1872, Colonel Robertson Ross reported upon the fearful results of this nefarious traffic: ' . . . at Fort Edmonton, during the present summer, whiskey was openly sold to the Blackfeet and other Indians trading at the post by some smugglers from the United States who derive large profit thereby, and on these traders being remonstrated by Hardisty, the gentleman in charge of the Hudson's Bay Post, they coolly replied that they knew very well that what they were doing was contrary to the law of both countries, but as there was no force there to prevent them, they would do just as they pleased.'"

*A. L. Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains*; Copp, Clark Co. Ltd.; page 14:

"To what a pitch of disorder the Indians were being hastened is made evident in a report of Colonel Robertson Ross, the Adjutant-General, who was dispatched by the Canadian Government in the summer of 1872. ' . . . at Edmonton there is a notorious murderer, a Cree Indian, called Ta-ha-Kooch, who has committed several murders, and who should have been apprehended long ago. This man is to be seen openly walking about the Post . . .'"

*John MacLean, D.D., *McDougal of Alberta*; page 121:

"Trained in the Indian Lodges, unconsciously using the native modes of thought and forms of speech, dropping a Cree word now and again, McDougal's addresses were most picturesque. I have often listened to these addresses and smiled."

*A. L. Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains*:

"The column en route presented a fine, and at the same time an astonishing appearance. In the van came 'A' division with dark brown horses; 'C' with light chestnuts; 'D' with their greys; 'E' with their black horses; and lastly 'F' with their light bays."

CHAPTER VI.

¹ Rev. Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"In the spring of 1875, I left my parish in the Toronto diocese to become a missionary in the far Northwest. . . . It looked a very serious business to get to Edmonton and mountain district around it without any well defined means of transit . . . no public boats . . . no bridges crossing rivers . . . only God to guide . . . as we proceeded west, Indians became more restive . . . came to Edmonton, September 28th, 1875 . . . the journey took five months."

² *Ibid*:

"On arriving at Collingwood on the south point of Georgian Bay, with a favourite horse, a light buckboard, and an *English orphan boy* as my servant and companion, I found the ice was still in the bay, but the vessel ready to proceed as soon as practicable up the Great Lakes."

³ A roomy and comfortable hostel, whose proprietor was Donald Ross, was built in early days on McDougall's hill which faced south-east to the river. It was advertised as the 'only house of entertainment between Winnipeg and Vancouver'. The trees that were planted before this building still stand just east of 101st Street, below the hill, by the C.N.R. tracks.—(The Author).

⁴ Rev. Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"I could not purchase a piece of land to build a cottage, where Edmonton now is, I had looked about me for a 'location', and I chose the Hermitage, where I now live."

⁵ G. F. G. Stanley, *Birth of the Northwest*:

"In 1879 the Dominion Land Surveyor reported that the Edmonton Settlement extends along the Saskatchewan about eight miles, principally on the North bank."

⁶ Rev. Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"The Hermitage is situated on the North Saskatchewan river, about seven miles from Edmonton; it would in most countries be considered a pleasant locality. Around it are hills and valleys, trees and water. From it for twenty years missionary journeys have been made to settlements, and Indian tents, over a space of two hundred miles, and it has been the centre of all the work which one solitary missionary has been able to accomplish."

⁷ This story of the "turnip supper" was related to the author by J. W. McFadden as an experience he had at Donald Ross' Hotel in the 80's, when he first came to Edmonton as a surveyor.—(The Author).

⁸ Amelia M. Pagit, *People of the Plains*:

"... the Thirst Dance—in the Cree language it was called 'Ne-pah-quah-seemun' which means 'dancing through a day and night without quenching one's thirst'. . . . Thus the ceremony only took place in the early summer, generally in the month of June."

⁹ Related to the author by Mrs. W. J. Plumley.

"Laurence Garneau, for whom the subdivision 'Garneau' is named, was a very able violinist. He was in constant demand for dances and concerts in the early days."

¹⁰ Excerpt from Author's interview with Winterburn Reserve Indian, John Thomas (Demas). Interpreter Alexis Morin.

"... Indian girl shy . . . no talk to boy. Indian boy say he want drink. If she not listen him she not want him. If she give him it mean she like him too and they get married—quick — — —"

"I get my squaw so."

"I know my age is ninety-eight years — — — — —".

¹¹ A goldpanner and settler of the sixties by the name of Tom Clover was very successful in finding gold on a bar in a bend of the Saskatchewan river across from where the Hermitage stood. The district and village near this place is now known as Clover Bar.—(The Author)

- ¹² *Edmonton Bulletin*, Special Christmas Number, 1908; (Recounting Edmonton's early History):

"In December 1864, they (Gibbon's party) reached this (Edmonton) fort, then in charge of Chief Factor Christie. There was not a house outside of the Fort Stockade, and within it were only the offices of the Fort and its employees, and the small log chapel of which Father Lacombe was pastor. Mr. Gibbons returned to Edmonton and for some time washed out \$20 to \$25 worth of gold at Miner's Flats daily."

- ¹³ Rev. Father P. Duchaussois, O.M.I., *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*:

(Page 47)—"On September 24, 1859, Sisters Emery, Lamy and Alphonsus arrived at Lac St. Anne. In 1863 they were transferred to St. Albert."

(Page 278)—"*At St. Albert* there was a parochial school, orphanage, farm and care of the poor and sick; Indian boarding school for boys and girls; Indian Industrial School for boys—Boarding school for white children. *At Edmonton*: hospital, with training school for nurses."

- ¹⁴ E. A. Corbett, *McQueen of Edmonton*:

"Reverend A. B. Baird had been sent to Edmonton in response to repeated requests from the little band of Presbyterians gathered in and about Fort Edmonton. . . . He started the long journey to Edmonton arriving October 29, 1881. . . . Dr. Baird has many interesting stories to tell of those early days. One that is well known to all his friends has to do with a double baptism in which he played an important part. Apparently the young minister had received the idea of having all baptisms performed in the church. The ordeal of standing in front of a congregation with a squalling baby never did appeal strongly to young fathers as a pleasant way to spend Sunday morning. One young couple in particular could not get up courage enough to face the ordeal and bring their baby boy to the church. It happened that a member of Father Grouard's flock, a French girl by name of Veronique, had been employed as nurse maid for the youngster, and she became greatly concerned about the unregenerate condition of her charge. One day, before taking the boy for his daily walk, she was seen to array herself in ceremonial garb, but no questions were asked. When she returned, however, she announced triumphantly: 'Well, I've had him baptized. Father Grouard did it.' The very next Sunday the parents of the child appeared before the Presbyterian minister and asked that the ceremony be repeated."

CHAPTER VII.

¹Rev. Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"At Edmonton, in 1875, the sparse population consisted of a few Hudson's Bay employees, changing mounted police, roaming miners and people who spoke the Cree language, and were half their time freighting on the plains."

²*Ibid*:

"On my land I had a beautiful grove of spruce firs, and being fond of trees, I spent time and money in clearing the grove. Once, on returning home, I found persons had in my absence taken down the fence, cut down some of the trees, scattered the waste around, and carried the timber away. Presently I found the man who had done this wrong, and told him not to come on such business again. Instead of being ashamed, he told me he should do as he pleased with the grove, and that he should not hesitate to take it all away."

³Indian word said at time of offering refreshment, meaning: "May this refresh you and satisfy".—(The Author).

⁴The lake here referred to is 'McKernan's Lake'—which lay south of the University of Alberta grounds. It has long since been drained.—(The Author).

⁵Heber C. Jamieson, M.D., *The Early Medical History of Edmonton*:

"In 1872 came Dr. George Verrey in company with George McDougall, son of the pioneer Methodist missionary. Dr. Verrey, a graduate of St. Bartholomew's, London, became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1859, and after practicing medicine in Australia he served as a military surgeon in the China War. It is only from letters in which his life in the west is reflected and the local newspaper that one gets some idea of the hardship incident to his practice in Edmonton. He married a friend of the McDougalls. His time was fully occupied for several years in the practice of medicine and farming, but there was little remuneration, and with a growing family financial difficulties beset him and he gave way to fits of depression. He died in November, 1881, and the *Edmonton Bulletin* said of him that 'In his medical practice he was singularly successful and the greater part of the people had every confidence in his skill.' He died apparently of an overdose of chloral taken during an acute illness."

⁶G. A. McKee, *Edmonton School District*, No. 7, 1885-1935:

"The real first school was held in a house on Ross Flats for the children of the employees of the fort, 1874-1876. A Dr. Verrey was the teacher . . . at that time the adult population of Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, including halfbreeds, was 275—school population must have been meagre."

⁷The University Hospital and the Newburn Memorial Hospital covering two blocks, are located on the trail from McKernan's Lake to the old ferry landing, near the 105th St. Bridge. The University of Alberta Campus (with its Medical and Chemical laboratories) is adjacent to the Hospital grounds.—(The Author).

✓ ⁸The Edmonton City Power Station is located near the site of the old Indian graveyard.—(The Author).

CHAPTER VIII.

¹George F. G. Stanley, D. Phil., *The Birth of Western Canada*:

"From Red River to the Saskatchewan Valley the only means of transport were Red River carts and the American 'democrat'. If favourable weather prevailed Prince Albert might be reached in one month. To reach Edmonton was just as far again."

²G. Mercer Adam, *The Canadian Northwest*; (From a paper read by Alex Begg, before the Royal Colonial Institute):

"Never shall I forget the scene that presented itself when I first saw Fort Garry. Hundreds of Indian lodges and tepees covered the plain, many of the aborigines and plain hunters having congregated at the spot to obtain supplies for the winter hunt. Half a mile from the Fort stood about a dozen houses, the homes and shops of the free traders."

³R. G. MacBeth, *Policing the Plains*:

"... a 'pull out' or what the old traders used to call a 'Hudson's Bay start'. The idea of a 'pull out' before the real journey began was to shake the line of the caravan into shape, take out any kinks that might need straightening, and generally see that everything was working satisfactorily."

⁴From interview given the author by Mrs. Robert Turnbull (nee Annie McKernan):

"Mrs. Robert Turnbull (nee Annie McKernan) was born in 1873 in Ontario. Her uncle, James McKernan came to Edmonton with the North West Mounted Police in 1874. He was a young boy then and remained here for three years. When he returned to Ontario he told his brother, (Robert McKernan) her father, of the wonders of the West. The following year Robert McKernan moved with his family (1877) and came back with James McKernan to the West. They brought with them the first telegraph wire from Winnipeg. This wire was put up, as she remembered it, from tree to tree and only where no trees could be found were poles erected."

"Her father bought his first farm from an Indian called 'Emlaw', which was on the South Side. She remembers only fragments of the trip when they came to Winnipeg by train. Then they took Red River carts and came to Edmonton. They settled in Hay Lakes for a year and a half. Then they came to the farm near Edmonton, which is now known as the McKernan Lake district."

⁵Janey Canuck, *Open Trails*; page 104:

"The Crees and Ojibways did not call the river the 'Saskatchewan'. Our name is a corruption of their words 'Ke-sis-kat-je-wun' which means a 'rapid current'."

⁶Mr. J. M. Taylor, (Taylor and Pearson Broadcasting Station, CJCA), Edmonton:

"My father, Alexander Taylor, was Edmonton's first telegrapher... I recall seeing the original telegraph instrument and the large glass jars containing bluestone near by it."

⁷Sir Cecil Denny, Bt., *The Law Marches West*; page 97:

"In the year 1876 control of the Northwest Mounted Police was transferred from Department of Justice to that of the Secretary of State."

CHAPTER IX.

¹Mr. John Oliver, *Edmonton Bulletin* office, Jasper Avenue; (son of Hon. Frank Oliver, co-founder of *The Bulletin*);

"My father came to Edmonton in 1876 and was engaged in trading for a few years prior to his starting the 'Bulletin' which was begun in 1880.

"Charley Ross and two other men (whose names I do not recall at this moment) were with him when he teamed the 'flat bed press (which came from Philadelphia) from Winnipeg.

"It was in the summer of 1880 on their return from Winnipeg that they had difficulty in crossing the South Saskatchewan. One of the oxen must have stepped in the hole and then the wagon and contents were overturned in the water. They retrieved their load; only one box of type was lost, containing the 'slug' or banner line, 'Edmonton Bulletin'.

"So when they came to making the first printing of the paper and my father was at a loss to know what to do, Alex Taylor, the telegraphist, who was an expert carver, offered to make the type; which he did. Looking at those first 'Bulletins' you will see that one of the 't's' is not quite true and accurate.

"Father had had experience as a member of the composing room of the Manitoba Free Press before he came here, so the newspaper business was not new to him. The original Bulletin Building, as you know, is out at the Exhibition grounds.

"Father died on March 31st, 1933."

* Bulletin, Volume I, Number 1:

THE BULLETIN

Vol. I

EDMONTON, N. W. T., DECEMBER 6, 1880.

NUMBER 1.

NO TELEGRAMS

As the line has been down since Saturday between Hay Lake and here, we are without telegrams for this issue. A man will leave to-morrow to repair it, and by next week we hope to be able to give the latest news from the East up to date

"HEWALD" EXTRA.

The following extra from the "Saskatchewan Herald" office arrived here by last mail.—

BATTLEFORD, Nov. 22, 1880

By Cable to the "Herald."—LONDON, Nov. 15.—Hannan beat Trickett by three boat lengths, winning the championship of the world

From Winnipeg—Garfield, Republican, has been elected President of the United States.

A provisional contract has been signed by which the syndicate binds itself to complete the prairie Section of the C. P. R. in three years.

It is said there is great trouble among the people (original copy too indistinct) have been shot, and should there not be a change in the aspect of affairs a revolution is imminent

REDUCING THE FORCE.—Eastern papers say that the Department of the Interior, having concluded to reduce the number of officers in charge of the Mounted Police by six, the position made vacant by the death of the late Superintendent Dalrymple Clarke will not be filled. There are to be no immediate dismissals, but as officers are removed by the hand of death, or voluntarily send in their resignations, their respective offices will be abolished, and the work divided up among those remaining.

The Government has relieved Mr. Ryan of the contract for the first hundred miles of the C. P. R. west of Winnipeg, and will proceed with the construction in a more substantial manner than his contract called for—and, it is to be hoped, a little quicker.

The Scott Temperance Act has been carried by a large majority in Marquette County, Manitoba. The people of Portage la Prairie have entered a protest against it. They don't know what is good for themselves.

Track was laid on the C. P. R. east of Winnipeg to within three miles of Rat Portage at last accounts.

The weekly mail service has been extended to West Tail Creek settlement.

Missin Bull is again talking of going south

LOCAL.

MR. A. LANG has captured a young silver grey fox. A SPECIAL CONSTABLE is to be sworn in for duty around Edmonton.

REV. MR. STEINHAUER, of White Fish Lake, lately addressed the Methodist conference in Montreal.

MR. CLER has the contract for the Indian Department flour at \$7.50 for Edmonton delivery and \$8.50 for Victoria.

GEORGE GAONON lately killed a very large wolf which, after disposing of one of his sheep, came back for another.

The sheep lately imported from Montana by J. Voler, and sold in this district are doing much better than was expected.

ALEX. McDONALD and Albert Boyd left for Bow River to-day. The former expects to return to Edmonton next April to start farming.

MR. GLASS has started a subscription list for the purpose of supplying the Methodist Mission church with firewood, oil, etc., for the winter.

ABRAHAM SPEYER and others from the Battle River settlement 50 miles from here, brought the first grain to the Edmonton Mills to-day—31 bushels of barley.

NEW YEAR'S DAY is drawing nigh, and we have not heard of anything being done about the grain show. Would it not be advisable to start the ball.

A BIG LAKE resident wants to know why the Government potatoe contract was not awarded to him, seeing that his offer was 20 cents lower than that of the party who secured it.

MR. LUCAS, Government farmer at Peace Hills, has been supplied with his share of that band of crows. They are reported to be the sickest looking lot of animals in the country.

The following are the ruling prices for produce in this vicinity.—Oats \$1.00 per bushel of 34 lbs., wheat \$2.00 to \$2.50, barley \$1.00, peas .25 per lb., potatoes \$1.00, onions \$2.00, and butter .50.

Last Saturday morning the thermometers at Ft. Edmonton and Saskatchewan registered 47° below zero. This cold snap, which set in last Tuesday, is much more severe than the corresponding one last year, but appears to be about over.

MR. WM. CURT is in a bad fix about his threshing. Lamoreaux threshed out 1,000 bushels on his Sturgeon River farm, and quit, leaving two stacks unthreshed, and says that he will set fire to his machine rather than thresh another bushel, while Smith is going to quit threshing, on account of the cold, and make shingles for the rest of the winter.

GENERAL NEWS

The Dominion census will be taken on Monday, April 3rd next.

The Dominion Parliament is expected to meet on the 13th of January.

The town of Quetzelle British Columbia has been destroyed by fire, except one house.

A gold nugget weighing six ounces is reported to have been found near the city of Quebec.

In New York City fully one half of the stage and cab horses are laid up with the epizootic.

The railway contractors in British Columbia offer \$1.75 and \$2.00 per day for white laborers.

A number of the expelled Jesuits from France have taken up their residence in Toronto.

Of the \$860,000 of exports of British Columbia for the quarter ending 31st August, the mines supplied \$430,000.

A company has been formed in Winnipeg for bridging the Assiniboine, and another for bridging the Red River.

A very rich lead of gold has been discovered at Tangier, Nova Scotia, and a company has been formed to work it.

The Czar of Russia, who lost his wife a short time ago, is married again. He had not been blown up for several days and was feeling lonesome.

Drunken Indians are a common thing on the streets of Winnipeg and the local papers want one or two of the liquor vendors fined, as an example.

The Lake Superior terminus of the Canada Pacific railway is to be changed from Fort William to Prince Arthur's Landing, where it should have been first.

An order was issued that all Indians within the city limits of Victoria, British Columbia, should return to their reserve. A number who refused have been arrested.

A large land slide has completely blocked up the Thompson River, British Columbia, leaving the channel dry below the dam. An immense destruction of property is expected when it gives way.

Chief Victoria, who has been making it interesting on the Mexican frontier lately, having murdered over 400 persons during the past year, was overtaken by Mexican troops on the 14th of October, and killed, with 50 of his men.

A fierce war is being carried on between the railroads running west from Chicago. The Chicago Burlington & Quincy and Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific roads are selling tickets from Chicago to Kansas City for 50 cents. The regular fare is \$14.80.

The British Government is making preparations to sit down on the Irish Land League agitators. Large reinforcements of troops are being hurried into Ireland, and the leaders of the league are to be arrested and tried for conspiracy. The bands at Woolwich arsenal are busy making buckshot cartridge for the use of the troops in Ireland. This is peace at any price with a vengeance.

A new trial has been ordered in the Biddulph murder case. The trial has already cost the Crown about \$5,000. The jury failed to agree.

The British Government is in trouble again in South Africa. A tribe called the Basutos have turned loose, and are making as good a fight as the Zulus. They are being aided by other tribes, and some of the settlements are in great danger of being annihilated.

ADVERTISEMENTS

JAMES McDONALD Carpenter and Joiner
Edmonton Milling Co.'s Mills Wood Turning
done to order

J. KNOWLES Practical Miller and Millwright
Plans and Specifications for any kind of machinery
made on application—Orders solicited Address
Edmonton Mills.

EDMONTON MILLS—The Edmonton Milling Co. announce to the public of Edmonton and vicinity that their mill will be ready to do gristing in a couple of weeks. The exact date will be announced in due course, also the days set apart for grinding Wheat, Barley or Feed. Grain in sacks may be stored in the mill at once. No grain can be stored in bulk. As we have separate bolts for barley and wheat, first class work is guaranteed. Customers can depend on getting their grists back on the day they bring them.

Seventh bushel toll

EDMONTON HOTEL & FEED STABLES

Established 1867.

The pioneer house of accommodation this side of Portage la Prairie. A good game of

BILLIARDS OR POOL.

Can be played, and a very social evening can be spent in the Billiard Room.

Donald Ross, Proprietor

FRANK OLIVER, Edmonton, (fourth door east of Methodist Church) has on hand a full stock of GROCERIES, comprising Black and Green Teas, Crushed Sugar, Coffee, Myrtle Navy Tobacco, Raisins, Currants, Rice, Oatmeal, Beans, Dried and Evaporated Apples, California Fruit, etc., Hardware, comprising Grain Shovels, Miner's Shovels, Hay and Manure Forks, Ox Bows and 1 Yoke Staples, Strap Hinges, Gold Pans, Quicksilver, 3-4, 5-8 and 3-8, Manger Rope, Canadian Axes and Handles, Large Mirror, Butter Bowls, Bread Pans, Ready-Made Stove Pipe and Elbows, etc., Boys' and Men's and Women's wear, and Dry Goods, comprising Seamless Bags, and a few pair of extra good Overall Shirts, Drawers and Socks. A yoke of young, well bred Oxen, and 3,000 lbs. of the best Beef in the country.

THE BULLETIN

Will be published at Edmonton every Monday morning, from the 1st of December, until the 1st of May.

Subscription for the season \$2.00.

Season advertisements \$5.00 per inch. Transient advertisements, .10 per line each insertion. Business cards not over four lines \$2.50.

Payments strictly in advance.

Notices of births, marriages and deaths, free.

TAYLOR & OLIVER, Proprietors.

EDMONTON BULLETIN, DEC. 6, 1880.

ABOUT OURSELVES.

Last winter, after the telegraph line had been extended to Edmonton, and an office established, an arrangement was made by which a weekly bulletin was sent over the line, so that the people here might be informed at the earliest possible date of whatever notable events were transpiring at the time in the world at large. But this plan was found to be expensive to a few and, for various reasons, unsatisfactory to all. It was thought to be a better plan to have the bulletin printed so that every subscriber to the fund could be supplied with a copy. To this end a hand press and a quantity of printing material has been procured, a special correspondent has been engaged in Winnipeg and every Monday morning from this issue until the 1st of May we will issue a small sheet in newspaper form, which will contain a bulletin, giving the most notable occurrences in the world at large and matters concerning the North-West Territories in particular, local news from all parts of the Upper Saskatchewan country, opinions on matters and things connected with the North-West, and a synopsis of the news brought in by the previous mail.

A severe snow storm took place in Minnesota and Dakota about the 20th of October. Six inches of snow fell at Fargo, and the Northern Pacific trains were blockaded. Our first sleighing came on the 1st of December and there is only three inches of snow yet.

A new railroad company has been organized in Manitoba called the Westbourne & North-Western. It will run (?) from Portage la Prairie north-westerly along the base of the Riding Mountains.

Mr. E. McCOLL, Indian Superintendent, has got back to Winnipeg from a tour of inspection in the West and North-West. It is to be hoped that next season he may call here.

INDIANS

Until the last few years it has been the boast of the Canadian Government that, by strictly observing the letter and spirit of all promises made to the Indians, they have, while settling up the country, preserved the most cordial relations with them. But times are changing, and the old idea that honor or honesty is the best policy is played out—at least in this district. Whether it was because the progress of the age demanded a change, or because it was more convenient for the paymaster, or because it was from a desire on the part of the Government to cheat the Indians, or because the paymaster calculated to make a good thing, or only because it was a blunder—which is more than a crime—is beyond the power of our finite minds to decide, but, with or without reason, a most immitigated swindle has been perpetrated on a number of the treaty Indians of this agency this year.

According to the terms of the treaty made between them and the Canadian Government a certain yearly payment was to be made to them forever without fail, in return for their title to the land. Until now the payments have been made in full, but this summer, on account of the short notice that was given, all the Indians had not collected at the treaty ground on the day of payment, and when the agent was asked to wait a day or two for them to come in, he said that they need not leave their huts just then, and he would leave the money due them so that they could get it when it was more convenient. This very sensible proposition met with the approval of the chiefs, and Mr. Wadsworth, after paying those present, went on his way, but, although reminded of it, did not leave any money or make any arrangements to redeem his promise. When the Indians returned from their hunt they enquired for their annuities, and have been enquiring ever since, but can get no satisfaction on the subject. These Indians belong to a small tribe called the Mountain Stoneys, and have always been friendly with the whites, and it is a very small piece of business on the part of the Government, or its agent, to wilfully deceive them, as they would not dare to do the Blackfeet.

Let it be remembered that a smaller reason than this precipitated the Minnesota massacre, and, although there is no danger to be apprehended from these people just now, in view of the fact that there is liable to be an outbreak of the plain Indians at any moment, it would be well for the Government, instead of estranging those who are friendly, to bind

them closer by fair and honest treatment, so that if the time should come when the scattered settlements of this country would have to make head against an overwhelming force of hostile Indians, without the possibility of Government aid in time to be of any service, they could count on the help or at least the friendly neutrality, of the only Indians the Blackfeet are afraid of.

LOCAL.

EASTERN mail left on the 30th.

HAY is worth from \$3 to \$4 per cart load.

THE Sturgeon River Mill will not run for a week.

First sleighing of the season on the 30th November.

LANORSAUX' machine was laid up at Harnois' by the cold.

LOGAN'S machine threshed 400 bushels for its owners, and is laid up.

ED. McPHERSON has sent his horses out to Abram's, on Battle River, to winter.

MR. JAMES PRICE, of Ft. Saskatchewan, received a legacy of \$1,500 by last mail.

THE H B C have let five different contracts for getting out saw logs this winter.

ALEX. STEWART left on Saturday for the head waters of this river on an exploring expedition.

A REDUCTION of 45 cents has been made in the tariff on telegrams between Edmonton and Montreal.

JATTLE PAUL, freighter, left for the Bow River last Friday, with goods for the H B Company and A. McDonald.

A PETITION has been forwarded to the Grand Judge A. F. & A. M. of Canada asking a charter for a lodge at Edmonton.

THE little Giant threshed 2,500 bushels for the proprietors, and quit before finishing them. It has gone out of business.

DONALD McLEOD'S carts arrived yesterday from Carlton with bacon for the H B C. and freight for the Indian Department.

THE H B C. has let a contract to Alex. Robinson for taking out 200 tons of coal. It will be taken out of the bank on Mr. Gruet's property.

OWING to the laxity of the Indian Department, the Indians at Lake St. Anne are without netting to catch fish. The Lake swarms with them this year.

JOHN COUTURE, freighter, arrived to-day with ten carts loaded with bacon from Carlton, for the Company. He passed McLeod's carts at Victoria road.

MESSRS. SINCLAIR & McLane have the mail contract from Winnipeg to here, 925 miles, for 1 year. Mr. McLane was formerly a resident of Edmonton.

MR. SMITH has threshed 11,000 bushels of grain up to date, and is at Big Lake now. On the 1st of the month he was unable to thresh in the forenoon on account of the cold.

THE noble red men are equal to the occasion now that Government has stopped their rations. Takoots a few days ago took a notion to hunt, and last night brought 400 rats to the Company.

THE Rev. Mr. Sevrigh, of Goderich, Ont., has been appointed to the Presbyterian mission of Prince Albert, the present incumbent, Rev. James Duncan, having been appointed to Edmonton.

Eighteen grape vines and seven rose bush cuttings were received here last mail, and have been divided between Messrs. Roas, Hardisty, and Reid, who will attempt their cultivation next season.

A NUMBER of Montreal capitalists are forming a company to engage in stock-raising in the vicinity of Bow River. The Hon. Senator Cochrane, the well known cattle-breeder is the principal promoter.

ALEX. STEWART, a former resident of Edmonton, and now in the employ of Capt. Moore, arrived here with Donald McLeod on the 26th ult., to look after the Captain's timber interests here.

WHEN Mr. J. Norris came in from Bow River this fall, he brought, in addition to a large herd of horses and cattle, a running horse that he called "Touch Me Not," but which other parties say is "Blackbird," a horse well known in the McLeod and Bow River country. He has since sold the horse to Mr. Labelle for \$400.

THE Montreal "Witness" says that Rapid City had the honor of holding the first agricultural show in the North-West, last October. We beg pardon. An agricultural show was held at Edmonton on the 15th of October '79, at which over \$200 was distributed in prizes, leaving a cash balance in the hands of the society of \$160, which has since been expended for seed grain.

Later details from the North-West would seem to indicate that a severer struggle than at first supposed has taken place between the Canadian and American Indians. The trouble took place at Missouri Coteau, a range of hills extending from the international boundary in a north-westerly direction toward Old Wife's Lakes. The Canadians were Ocean Man's and White Bear's band, near Moose Mountain, seventy miles south-west of Ft. Ellice, where they went down to the international boundary in pursuit of Buffalo. The Americans, composed of Mandans and Gros Ventres from Montana, opened fire on the Canadian Indians with Winchester repeating rifles. The fight was kept up all day, all the small Canadians being killed, as well as a number of women and children. One American was found dead after the combat. On their retreat he was scalped, and a war dance took place over it at Ft. Ellice.—Montreal Witness.

Prince Albert and St. Laurent have been formed into a territorial electoral division. The election will be held this winter. Two electoral divisions have also been formed in the Little Saskatchewan country.

Col. McLeod is still acting Police Commissioner.

²Edmonton Bulletin, April 4th, 1881:

"The Bulletin" will be discontinued from this date as the presence of spring obliges the proprietors to turn their attention to other matters. We regret our inability to publish until the 1st of May and to those of our subscribers, who think they have not had the worth of their money, we can only say that they have at least had the best end of the bargain. However, next fall we propose to issue the 'Bulletin' in an enlarged form, when we will make up to both subscriber and advertiser the number of issues still due."

CHAPTER X.

¹G. A. McKee, Supt. of Schools, *Edmonton School District, No. 7, (1885-1935)*:

"In 1881, Edmonton's first school was built. The organization behind it was purely voluntary. The first trustees were Matthew McCauley, William Rowland, and Malcolm Groat. . . . The Hudson's Bay Company donated, as a school site, four lots where McKay Avenue School now stands (104th St., at 99th Ave.). The money for the building was raised by private subscription. Oliver and McDonald secured the contract at a price of \$968.00. The building was ready for occupancy just one month after the citizens decided to build.

"The specifications of the first school are rather interesting. It was to be 24 by 30 feet, with a ten foot ceiling. The inside and outside walls were to be dressed; the outside walls battened; and the walls were to be filled with sawdust well rammed down. The school was to have a chimney and the doors and windows were both to have two coats of paint. The room had to have a teacher's desk and twelve forms four feet long, and twelve desks four feet long and a blackboard. It was the first lumber building in Edmonton."

²Rev. Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"Our half-races are divided into English and French, chiefly because of their language. Probably the French are the older people, for the French from Quebec found their way in early days up the Saskatchewan. These are Roman Catholics, and they chiefly live around the Catholic mission-stations. To see them turn out on some holiday occasion, one could fancy one's self in a French provincial town. Their manners are very French, and by no means ungraceful. Their French is that of the eighteenth century . . . country French with a mixture of the modern Parisian accent. All or partly come by their education in connection with St. Albert's Mission. The women especially have often very modest and pretty manners. From early life they are cared for and trained by the *Grey Sisters*, and, being naturally imitative, they catch and retain nice modes of behaviour."

³"Ta-ta-wah" Indian greeting for visitors, meaning: "There is always room for you."
—(The Author).

⁴G. A. McKee, Supt. of Schools, *Edmonton School District, No. 7, (1885-1935)*:

"The engaging of the teacher was undertaken by the three trustees and the Rev. A. B. Baird and Mr. R. Hardisty. The questions arose as to how the salary was to be paid. The chairman produced a guarantee list with the following heading—

"We, the undersigned, do hereby agree to become liable to a majority of our number equally in the sum of \$500.00, to be paid to the teacher of a school at Edmonton for one year's service."

"The signatures were—R. Hardisty, J. Cameron, D. McLeod, J. A. McRae, R. Logan, J. A. McDougall, J. Morris, C. Stewart, K. McDonald, M. A. Groat.

"The teacher appointed was a *Mr. Harris*.

"The question of securing a government grant was discussed. The proposal to tax pupils was turned down in favor of the principle of an absolutely free school. Consequently the school was financed by voluntary subscription and this arrangement persisted for three years."

⁵Told to the author by Jane (Lauder) Griesbach:

"I attended the old Edmonton school that had been built in 1881. Once a boy put a bottle of frozen ink on the stove to thaw. It exploded and left a spot on the ceiling that remained there for many years."

CHAPTER XI.

¹ S. A. Carson and Mrs. J. Paul: *A Cameo of the West*.

"In those days we made our candles from suet, as coal oil was so expensive, \$3.50 per gallon."

² A. L. Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains*:

"The 'Sun Dance' in itself was a cruel, barbarous ordeal which a young Indian who had 'made his medicine' was compelled to undergo before he could aspire to be a 'brave'. It meant his standing almost naked, but with his war-gear of shield and weapons on, while his breast was lacerated with wooden splints attached by cords to the top of a long pole. In the presence of a number of the warriors of his tribe, who assembled to mark his demeanour and to encourage him, the young aspirant threw himself back from the cords and with his face to the sun followed its course in a circle round the pole. If he passed the test successfully, he was admitted into the circle of the chosen ones.

"A variant of the ordeal was for the would-be 'brave' to submit to his skin being cut just under the shoulder blades. The flesh and muscles were then raised and tied to buffalo skulls. The thongs were made long enough to allow the skulls to dangle below the knees. Thus encumbered, the youth proceeded to dance around the circle, to the accompaniment of drums and the chanting of the spectators, until the weight of the skulls tore their fastenings from his flesh."

³ From interview given the author by Mrs. Robert Turnbull (nee Annie McKernan):

"In 1885, father came from town where he had heard from the carrier about Indian trouble at Wetaskiwin, and though it was ten o'clock at night, we children were awakened and they drove to the fort.

"We children thought it was a great lark, actually we had no fear of Indians. We knew them as peaceable, friendly people, though they were touchy and easily offended. There were about seven of us children then. We got to John Walter's place very late and we stayed over night there until the next morning and then crossed in the ferry. The fort was filled with tents that had been put up for temporary shelter for settlers. It was the busiest and most crowded place you ever saw.

She remembered that Dr. Verrey was in the fort at the time and that his children, four in number—two boys and two girls, Kitty and Fanny were twins.

"My brother had to go back to our farm every day to milk. He brought back the milk and mother churned and carried on much the same as at home. We remained in the fort for about three weeks and all the while men picketed the place."

⁴ A. L. Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains*:

"Through the winter of 1884-5 the half-breed agitators were busy formulating their plans. Meetings were held in many places—at St. Laurent, Batoche, Prince Albert, at Baptiste Boyer's house, at Nolin's house; emissaries went to and fro between settlements and Indian camps; and the people generally were worked up to a pitch of excitement.

"The Indian sub-agent in charge at Frog Lake was himself doubtful as to the attitude of Big Bear and his chiefs.

"On 2nd April, 1885, a band of Indians entered the village, and by their demeanour showed that trouble was to be apprehended. Going direct to the store belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company they demanded ammunition. The clerk in charge would have refused them, but in their excited condition this course might have been fatal to him. So much powder, ball, and caps as were in the place, fell to their hands. It was only a small quantity, fortunately, most of the supply having been sent off earlier to Fort Pitt in anticipation of a raid . . .

"After ransacking the store the Indians proceeded to take possession of the village. They invaded the church in which a service was being held, their painted faces and war-like gear frightening the women and children present. Then, swaggering about the street, they laid hands upon Quinn, the Indian sub-agent, and several others, threatening to shoot them if they interfered in any way. Quinn himself was requested to accompany the Indians to Big Bear's camp, to be held there as a prisoner, no doubt, but he declined to go. With the rest of the people he intended to make for Fort Pitt and seek protection there. On his refusal, a minor chief named 'Travelling Spirit' raised his gun and without more ado shot the poor fellow through the head.

"This act seemed to inflame the other Indians' lust for blood. In quick succession two French priests, Fathers Marchand and Falard, were shot down, together with several settlers. A Mr. Gowanlock was killed while in company with his wife and another

woman, all of whom were setting out for the Police barracks. He was struck in the back, as were most of those who fell. In all, eight men were massacred."

⁸ Sir Cecil E. Denny, *The Law Marches West*:

"At Edmonton, where Superintendent A. H. Griesbach was in command of the Mounted Police, no serious outrages had occurred, although the Indians of *Bob Tail's* and *Ermine Skin's* bands had plundered the Hudson's Bay stores at Battle River and the settlers around Beaver Lake, who fled to Fort Saskatchewan for protection."

⁹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, Christmas 1907:

"The Hudson's Bay house was fortified with sacks of flour, piled up inside the walls to stop bullets, and in town the 'Home Guard' was organized to take turns in watching during the night. This guard was kept up here (Edmonton) from the time of the Frog Lake Massacre until the troops came in. . . . They came in May and left in June."

⁷ Sheriff Robertson, *Edmonton Bulletin*, Christmas 1908:

"During the rebellion there were four families who never left the town to seek protection at the Fort or at the mission in St. Albert. These were the Olivers, Robertsons, Camerons and McCauleys."

⁸ Heber C. Jamieson, M.D., *The Early Medical History of Edmonton*:

"The Hermitage here mentioned was advertised as a school for children. Canon Newton was in charge. It was situated about eight miles down the river from Edmonton, and was often spoken of as the 'Lower Settlement'. Miss Newton had a *small log hospital* here. Shortly after the opening of the rude hospital and during the absence of Dr. Wilson at Regina, Miss Newton advertised that she was prepared to treat patients, particularly women and children, and that her fees were moderate."

⁹ Wm. Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan*:

"I was amused, and not displeased, by the following story, which was told me afterwards by one of the Crees.

"Near my residence in those days was a very retired place, where both water and facilities for encampment were found. Without my knowing it, a band of Indians had hidden themselves there, awaiting the order for an outbreak. Day by day, from the rising ground, they watched me in my garden, and discussed what they should do with me when the massacre began; and it was kindly decided that they would not meddle with the little white-robed priest, for I had not been bad to the Indians; but as for my mare, they might take her if they should be pressed for horses.

"As for the danger, I had, both at the time and afterwards, many proofs that it was very real; even the Indian children had decided what particular plunder they intended to appropriate; and they practised their bows and arrows in order to join in the fray. It was settled what families should be clubbed, in order to save the expense of powder and shot; and what women should be taken captive, and whose particular tent these fair ones were to adorn. I do not say that there were no bands loyal to the Government; but there were certainly very few in which there was no disaffection, and a *very great pressure* was put upon them all to throw off their allegiance."

¹⁰ *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Christmas 1908:

"During 1885, the year of the rebellion, Mr. Oliver who continued to publish his paper throughout the troubled time and never brought his family to the Fort or the mission for protection, says there was one morning when he did feel for a time thoroughly afraid. This is the story:

"The Sunday after the fight at Duck Lake and the massacre of the two priests at Frog Lake was a delightful cool spring day, and in the evening after church many of the men of the settlement sauntered up to Norris and Carey's store on the St. Albert trail (by Tenth Street now) and in this favorite loafing-place of the hamlet talked over the latest news of the rebellion. As the news always came by telegraph, Edmonton was kept well informed, and the men had a good basis of facts for their discussion.

"Some few were inclined to be troubled at this latest news, but Ed. Carey, who as a miner in the early days knew the Indians on both sides of the border, said decisively: 'We need never be afraid as long as the tents are here'. There was real assurance in that.

"He referred to the tents of the Indians and half-breeds in the valley around the Fort. There had always been tents there from the time of Mr. Oliver's first trip to Edmonton, and night after night—even that Sunday night—the people in the settlement on the hill could hear the tom-tom of the Indians' drums.

"The group at the store dispersed, the men sought their beds, but next morning when they awoke the *tents were gone*. The Indians had folded their tents in the darkness and deserted Edmonton.

"After Ed. Carey's remark on the previous night some of the men were seriously disturbed, but nothing came of it. After that night, however, the sound of the Indians' tom-tom has not been heard again at the Fort."

¹³ *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Christmas 1907:

"Some newcomers had begun to erect buildings on claims held by old-timers for a period of 10 to 20 years. John Sinclair, Colin Fraser and David McDougall held these claims.

"It was on Sinclair's near the site of the old Immigration Hall that an American prospector named George began to build in '82. The Ottawa Government was wired for protection after an indignation meeting of citizens, but the answer came that as the country was not surveyed nothing could be done in the matter. Presto! another indignation meeting; the organization of a Vigilance Committee, and the selection of Matthew McCauley as Captain.

"If no one in high office would protect the settler from claim-jumpers, then the settlers vowed, *we will protect ourselves!* It was decided to throw George's building over the bank near the present Queen's Hotel. Action was prompt; and George facing a crowd at his door with a brace of six-shooters in his hands, found himself pinioned and the revolvers taken away.

The forty men in the crowd began to push the building ahead of them slowly, determinedly to the cliff. George within his house refused to leave it, until at the last moment it tottered on the brink. The house went crashing down, and claim-jumping was thus peremptorily settled. Three months later a man named Benjamin jumped the claim of the Methodist church and his new building was treated in exactly the same way. This time 400 men had gathered to the fray and the house was sent in marvellously quick time down into the Vigilants' Depository, as the place was called."

¹⁴ *Edmonton Bulletin*, August 7th, 1886:

"Miss Newton, who has lately arrived from England to reside with her brother, the Rev. Canon Newton, is a regularly trained nurse in the Church of England. Miss Newton has practised in several London Hospitals, and she holds diplomas and testimonials of efficiency from the leading physicians. Besides she was, until her health broke down, lady professor in the Queen Charlotte's Hospital, London. Miss Newton, should her health permit, hopes to resume her hospital duties at the Hermitage."

¹⁵ R. W. Greene, *Edmonton*:

"Records reveal that the S. S. 'Parisian', flagship of the Allan Line, docked at a Canadian port August 23rd, 1885, she had a speed of twelve knots and tonnage of six thousand."

¹⁶ George F. G. Stanley, D. Phil., *The Birth of Western Canada*:

"Calgary had already formed a troop of scout cavalry and a home guard under the command of Major-General Strange, a retired Artillery officer ranching near the town, and on April 8th Strange was appointed to command the third column to move against the 65th Rifles of Montreal, the Winnipeg Light Infantry and the 9th Voltigeurs of Quebec. Provision was made for the defence of the southern part of the territory by volunteer companies and later by the 9th Voltigeurs, and on April 20th, Strange proceeded north to Edmonton with the first division of his force.

"Every precaution was taken against attack. Father Lacombe and the Reverend John McDougall of Morley were in advance of the troops to reassure the Indians, and to inform the settlers at Edmonton that the troops were advancing with all speed. The cavalry scouts under the command of Major Steele were detailed to protect the convoy.

"On May 1st the first division of the column reached Edmonton having covered about two hundred and ten miles in ten days."

¹⁷ *Ibid*:

"On May 15th, Riel was taken prisoner."

¹⁸ *Ibid*:

"That Riel was insane would not, at the present time, be seriously contested. He had entered the asylum of Longue Pointe at Montreal during 1876 and was later transferred to the provincial asylum at Beauport for a period of twenty months from May 20th, 1876, to January 23rd, 1878. One cannot read his political and religious writings, even prior to his return from the United States, without realizing that they were the work of an unbalanced mind. His 'mission' was his obsession, and it developed, under the strain and excitement of the agitation of 1884, into a form of mania. Riel saw himself as the 'prophet of the new world', he cast aside the doctrines of 'la vieille Rome' for those of his own creation. Even with the roar of the Middleton's cannon in their ears, Riel and his Council were to be found discussing, not the problem of defence, but the new names for the days of the week and acknowledging Riel's divine mission.

"Riel himself, however, vigorously repudiated the plea of insanity. In two addresses to the jury he destroyed his only possible defence. Hence, on November 16th, 1885, Louis Riel was hanged."

¹⁷ *Ibid*

"One of the principal points in danger was the town of Battleford. That Riel urged the Indians to *assault the fort* is shown by the following letter:

" 'Dear Brethren and Kinsmen—Since we wrote to you many important things have taken place. The Police came to attack us. We met them and God gave us victory. Thirty Metis and five Indians sustained the combat against one hundred and twenty men, who, after thirty-five or forty minutes' fighting, took flight. Praise God with us for the success He has granted us. Arise, face the enemy. If you can take Fort Battle, destroy it. Save all the merchandise and provisions and come and join us. Your number will probably permit you to send us a detachment of forty or fifty men. Whatever you do, do for the love of God. Under the protection of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John the Baptist, and be certain that faith works wonders. (Signed) Louis David Riel Exovede'."

CHAPTER XII.

¹The pioneer medical man of the North was Dr. W. M. McKay, who arrived in Hudson's Bay in 1864. His practice may be said to have extended over all the territory between Hudson's Bay to the Rockies and from the United States boundary to the Arctic Circle. Once he was sent to visit a tribe of Indians reported to be suffering an epidemic disease. Over a year was spent in travel before he reached his destination.—(The Author).

²As related to the author by Mrs. Harrison Young (nee Libby McDougall):

"When we realized that the Indians were becoming belligerent we left Lac la Biche, where my husband was in charge, to come to the shelter of Fort Edmonton. Mr. Richard Hardisty, then Chief Factor, was my sister's husband. I tied Fred, my baby boy, on my horse with me. It was a never to be forgotten journey. My sister, Eliza (Mrs. Hardisty), and I nearly wept for joy at seeing each other when we were safely arrived."

³Extract from author's interview with Mr. Fred Young (grandson of George McDougall):

"After the uprising, the Indians resented our joking them over their mistaken use of the toilet ware they had filched from our house at the post up North. Indians are very sensitive to ridicule."

CHAPTER XIII.

¹As related to the author by Mrs. W. J. Plumley:

"One night 'way back in the nineties, when I was alone on our homestead, I woke to find a prairie fire approaching and seemingly right upon us. I ran downstairs and in my panic I picked up the slop pails to pour on the burning grass. Actually the fire was still some miles away."

²Stanley C. Johnson, M.A., *A History of Emigration*; page 194:

"The Canadian Pacific Railway entered the North West Territory, that is to say, the old district of Assiniboia, in the summer of 1882, placing it for the first time in communication with the outer world. By the summer 1884 it had traversed both Assiniboia and the prairie lands of Alberta, and had reached as far as the Rockies. The effect of this enterprise on the population of the 'Provisional Districts' of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta may be seen from the following census figures, in which it must be added some 20,000 Indians are not included.

	1881	1885	Increase
Population	5,624	28,171	401%
Inhabited houses	2,064	9,460	358%"

³*Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Special Christmas Number, 1907:

"But for the picturesqueness and determination there was no struggle in Edmonton since the day of the Cree and Blackfoot reprisals equal to that which raged about the Land Office when the government land agent acting under instructions attempted to move to the new townsite on the south of the river (now Strathcona), the books and equipment of the Land Office. . . . But now, when the influences at work had got Dewdney, Minister of the Interior to order the removal of the government offices to the new town in spite of a promise already given to Edmonton; then the storm broke. . . . This blow to Edmonton, for years officially recognized as the district's capital, came in June following its incorporation as a town (1892). All its civic pride was afire and the old-timers rising in their might surrounded the unfortunate land agent and his wagon-load of furniture, promptly vetoing his action. He might go if he chose, they informed him, but the Land Office they vowed would stay in Edmonton. They took the nuts off the wagon and unhitched the horses, and in all Edmonton there was not another horse to be had to take part in such work. . . . And in the end the citizens triumphed; the books pertaining to Edmonton were restored to the office; a sub-office was opened on the south side and the most serious attempt made to build up the new town at the expense of the old was utterly crushed. . . . An amusing feature of the affair is that while in official telegrams to and from Ottawa addressed to or by Mayor McCauley the citizens' protest was referred to as a mob-violence, the Mayor himself was the most energetic leader of the so-called 'mob'. Offers to help Edmonton came to the Mayor from many outside points. Calgary offered to send men. Macleod had 200 willing to come, St. Albert offered 40 stalwarts, and all encouraged their Edmonton brethren to stand on their rights."

CHAPTER XIV.

¹*Edmonton Bulletin*, Christmas 1907:

"When in 1891 the builders of the Canadian Pacific Railway sent a spur line north from Calgary to the valley of the Saskatchewan it made a pause on the south bank of that river opposite Fort Edmonton, and the men behind it decided there was no present use of making a large expenditure to gain entrance to the frontier town sprawling its irregular highways along the Edmonton side."

*Sir Cecil Denny, *The Low Marches West*:

"The rush to the Klondyke by the overland route through Edmonton spelled tragedy for many a poor fellow. Men unused to hardship, unprepared, with useless transport, excess of baggage, inadequately provisioned and with clothing utterly unsuited to a winter, or even a summer, in the northern wilds joined in the stampede. Many of them were childishly ignorant of what lay before them, how or what route they would reach their destination. Some were even known to draw a line on the map of Edmonton to Dawson and say, 'Oh, that's easy'."

Those with pack horses found after going a certain distance north that all trails ceased. Miles on miles of swamps and muskegs stretched ahead; horses were abandoned and they plodded on afoot, packing what they could on their backs. Few ever reached the Klondyke. They went up the Peace River to the Liard and the Pelly and even down the great MacKenzie of the north.

"Hundreds of horses were left. Some died during the winter, others were killed by wolves and still others taken and used by the Indians. Not a few, running in the woods, were in evidence for years afterwards."

**Edmonton Bulletin*, March 5th, 1894:

"A meeting was held regarding petitioning the Government for constructing a bridge at Edmonton. A number of petitions and delegates had been sent to Ottawa on the subject, with the result that an engineer had been sent out and a survey of the site made. Estimates of the cost had also been given and they had been placed at about \$60,000.00. This bridge, the 'Low Level Bridge' was completed in 1898."

*Sir Cecil Denny, *The Low Marches West*:

"Edmonton was incorporated as a town in 1892, Mathew McCauley being the first mayor. The future city grew very slowly until 1897 when the great rush to the newly discovered gold-fields of the Klondyke started a boom which set Edmonton on its feet and the population in a few months increased from a few hundred to several thousand. Edmonton has forged ahead steadily, both in wealth and population, ever since."

"Edmonton was the outfitting point for many parties of gold seekers who went by the overland route to the Klondyke. They came in droves of all sorts and conditions, men and even women, grizzled prospectors, city clerks, soldiers, sailors, lawyers, parsons, with every conceivable scheme of travel in mind—pack trains, houses on wheels, canoes and boats of all descriptions, afoot, ahorseback, even barrels fitted with axles—and Edmonton was the point of departure. Goods of every description were in demand and the merchant reaped a rich harvest. Others came to share this golden opportunity, went into business and remained, so the Klondyke gold-rush was the making of modern Edmonton. Had this not occurred Strathcona might have been the principal city; as it is, Strathcona is South Edmonton, a part of the city."

*G. A. McKee, B.A., *Edmonton School District, No. 7 (1885-1935)*:

"In the year 1894, negotiations for the selection and purchase of a new school site were commenced. Considerable difference of opinion developed with regard to the sites suggested. After considerable discussion and negotiation, a piece of the Methodist Church property was secured as a site for the new school. This Methodist Church property included that whole area south of Jasper and between 100th St. and 101 St. The contract for the building was let to Mr. K. A. McLeod for \$6,257.00. The new building was originally known as the College Avenue School, and was located immediately in front of the present Memorial Hall. For a number of years it served as a public school, but ultimately became the Edmonton High School. The first principal in this school was Mr. K. W. McKenzie who was subsequently retired from teaching to engage in the book and stationery business. Mr. McKenzie had the distinction of being the first mayor of the City of Edmonton."

*The Land office building herein referred to, still stands on the corner of 106th St. and 100th Ave. The 19th Alberta Dragoons were stationed in it for many years since the new Land Office on 100-A St. was built.—(The Author).

⁷J. K. Macdonald (from address given in Edmonton, 1944):

"In hundreds came the gold seekers (1897) from far and the near places of the world—from England, Ireland, the United States, and Eastern Canada. Almost every walk of life was represented; a colonel from the English army, a vaudeville actor from New York, a deputy sheriff and Indian agent from Montana, a sleight of hand performer, and a thousand others from Heaven only knows where. There was a real lord from Ireland—Lord Avonmore he was called—but in recognition of his most outstanding characteristic he was soon, by the irreverent populace, rechristened 'Av-one-more'."

⁸*Edmonton Bulletin*, November 26th, 1894:

"The first annual dinner of the Edmonton Old Timers' Association took place on Thursday evening, last, at the Edmonton Hotel, the first house of entertainment between Portage la Prairie and the Rocky Mountains.

"About sixty members attended including Pres. Jas. Gibbons, Donald Ross, Vice-Pres. Mayor McCauley, Frank Oliver, M.L.A., Dr. Maloney, M.L.A. St. Albert, and Dr. Wilson ex-speaker of the Northwest Assembly.

"A letter of regret on account of inability to attend, from Father Lacombe was read by the Secretary of the Association, A. McNicol. The President called upon Rev. Dr. Newton for an address:—

"Gentlemen, in my study under the trees at the Hermitage, I sometimes dream dreams of great changes passing over the world. On the North Pacific Ocean, many events are likely to take place in future history; then our part of the continent will be increasingly one of the world's great highways, justifying the instinct of generations of travellers that the *true way to the east is by way of the west*; thus commerce will find new routes through our district which will open our land to new enterprises and revolutionize our solitudes, turning them into centres of human prosperity'."

⁹*Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Special Christmas Edition, 1908:

"The first passenger train to leave Calgary in 1891 on the new C. & E. railway had among its passengers the first banker of Edmonton, Mr. G. R. F. Kirkpatrick, a young man and member of a prominent Ontario family.

A large part of the business transacted consisted in buying gold amalgam. Sometimes this amounted to \$25,000 a year, all washed out of the Saskatchewan. The bank would buy it and ship it off to the Mint. For every ounce of the amalgam the miners received \$15.00 from the Bank here, and notwithstanding a time honored tradition about the honesty of miners, Mr. Kirkpatrick states they sometimes wet the gold to make it weigh more.

"The banker had also to watch closely in those days that there was not too much quicksilver inside the amalgam. To avoid paying for quicksilver at gold rates they frequently cut open the amalgam at the bank, and if it was very bad they sent it down to Raymer, the jeweller, to have the quicksilver burnt out. This was an important matter, for at the Mint the bank received only 60 cents an ounce for quicksilver and \$18 to \$19 for as much gold."

¹⁰Mr. J. K. MacDonald (from address given to Edmonton Little Theatre audience, 1944):

"The 'I Will' Steam Sleigh Company of Chicago comprised four mechanics from that city. They rented a fairly large carpenter shop near the site of the present Strand Theatre and worked hard all winter building four cabooses or cabins on wheels not unlike the ones that accompany threshing gangs. One was to supply the power, the next the fuel, and the third was the living space, and the last would contain their supplies. These wagons would be linked together. In the first they installed an expensive marine engine and boiler imported from Chicago on which they paid a duty of \$500. Two arms projecting from the front of the first cabin had suspended between them an iron drum about the size of an ordinary gasoline drum. This drum was studded with stout projecting prongs or cones and was to be revolved by means of two chains connected with the engine and attached by sprocket wheels to the drum. When the power was turned on, the drum was to revolve suiting itself to the inequalities on the ground as the arms permitted it to rise or fall as occasion required—the prongs would dig into the earth and perforce, the contrivance would pull itself along. At last, the proud day came when the completed contrivance was to demonstrate itself along the smooth surface of Jasper Avenue. Something, however, went wrong. The machine would not work; it would not pull itself along the hard, level road. No clutch had been provided to allow the power to be gradually applied. When the machine was started it started 'on high' and before speed could be acquired something had to break, and it did. The 'I Will' partnership went out of business that night and Kenny McLeod bought the engine parts of their machine."

CHAPTER XV.

¹Supt. J. W. Turner, *Waterworks Department, Edmonton's Municipal Utilities*, (1928):

"A limited number of residents had wells on their premises, while the few springs dotted about the town were also utilized. There were several large underground wooden tanks in various sections of the town which were supposed to be kept filled with water from the river. These tanks often proved to be most disappointing, as in time of fire, when the need was greatest, they were frequently found to be empty.

"Therefore, it was a distinct forward step in Edmonton's civic progress when the first bylaw was passed authorizing the expenditure for the installation of a water and sewer system in the fall of the year 1902, the work to be carried out on the north side of the river and east of 102nd Street. The exact figures for the population at the time were 5,445. The actual work was carried out during the summer of 1903, and at the end of the year the system comprised six and one-third miles of water mains, five miles of sewer-mains, and two miles of water and sewer branch services. There were 103 water services and 55 hydrants. . . .

"At this point a word should be said as to the actual source of Edmonton's water supply—the North Saskatchewan River. It speaks well for the care that has been exercised in dealing with the city's water that the inhabitants have never suffered from any epidemic of disease traceable to water-borne infection."

²Supt. W. Barnhouse, *Edmonton Municipal Utilities* (1828):

"History of the use of electricity for both commercial and domestic lighting purposes, commenced in Edmonton, 1891. In that year a group of the citizens formed a company under the style of the Edmonton Electric Light Company, and having obtained a ten-year franchise from the municipality, began operations under the management of the late Alex. Taylor. A steam plant was erected on the river bank near the low level bridge, and the necessary wire and poles were taken along Jasper Avenue to Kinistino Avenue (now 96th Street) to 103rd St., giving electrical service to the principal buildings and stores of the town."

³A. W. Haddow, *Edmonton City Engineer* (1943):

"The City property north of Jasper Avenue and west of 105th Street, was once fairly heavily wooded. Our City Engineer found it necessary to drain a large slough in the vicinity of 116th Street to make the ground suitable for building lots."

⁴Before the City of Edmonton streets and avenues were given name by numbers—Kinistino Avenue corresponded to 96th Street; 97th Street was Namayo Ave.; 98th Street, Fraser Ave.; and 99th Street was Queens Ave.; while 100th Street was McDougall Ave.—other streets extending north into what was then residential district, were named after our rivers such as: Nelson, Peace, Athabasca, McKenzie, etc.—(The Author).

⁵Edmonton was incorporated a city in the year 1904—as a town, 1892.—(The Author).

⁶Joe Morris ran the first automobile of Edmonton down Jasper Avenue in 1903. It was a Ford car, purchased in Winnipeg, first in the West. Mrs. Joe Morris still retains License No. 1 in the family.—(The Author).

⁷William Walter (son of John Walter), as related to the author:

"The flooring of the City of Edmonton boat was removed and used in our farm house which is in the Sandy Lake district a few miles south of Edmonton."

CHAPTER XVI

¹Edmonton Bulletin, August 31st, 1905:

"The First Provincial day"—"A procession will be formed to the Exhibition grounds where the ceremonies in connection with the inauguration take place. Following is the order of Parade: Flag and escort; Band (Calgary); Old Timers; Mayor and Council; Imperial Medalists Assoc.; Edmonton Fire Dept.; Band (Edmonton); Children; Farmers' Organizations; Fort Saskatchewan Rough Riders; Band (Strathcona); St. Jean Baptiste Society; German Society; Lacrosse, Hockey, Baseball and Polo Clubs; Band (St. Albert); Citizens on foot, mounted and in carriages."

²John Blue, *Alberta, Past and Present*:

"... Father Lacombe, the good father longed to go back to his hermitage and gladly gave up his church at St. Joachims (Edmonton) to his friend, Father Leduc. During Leduc's pastorate the present St. Joachims Church was erected (1891)."

³J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*:

"On Sept. 1st (1905), the formal inauguration of the Province of Alberta took place at Edmonton. His Excellency the Governor-General and the Countess Grey were present, accompanied by Lady Evelyn Grey and Colonel Hanbury Williams, C.B. With the Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, were the Hon. W. Paterson, Minister of Customs, and Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., others present were Mr. Wm. MacKenzie of the Canadian Northern Railway, Mr. B. E. Walker of Canadian Bank of Commerce, Messrs. A. C. Rutherford, R. B. Bennett, P. Talbot, M.P., J. A. Calder and Senator Lougheed."

⁴At a time about twenty-five years ago, most of the children of the Garneau district knew of "Old Johnny", the half-breed squatter, who had a shack half way up the hill on the south bank of the river.—(The Author).

⁵F. W. Hunt, *The New Provinces*—"The Canadian Magazine", Vol. 25, 1905:

"The writer was present at the inaugural celebration at Edmonton . . . the day was warm and clear—typical autumn weather of Canada's middle west. . . . Had I stood on the same spot twenty-five years ago and predicted such a scene to the few pioneer residents of that day, I should have been called a dreamer. Had I said that here a thousand miles beyond the borders of civilization, . . . that here on the river flat where the Redman camped while he exchanged his beaver-pelts for trinkets at the Hudson's Bay Company's store, would be a gathering of men and women, 20,000 strong, that 2,000 bright school children could be mustered at the schools and marched through the streets in parade, that there would be automobiles and elegant, footmen-attended carriages—had I drawn such a picture, I should have been counted insane."

⁶*The Toronto Globe*, Sept. 2nd, 1905, page 1—*Laurier to the Albertans*:

"In the course of his speech at Edmonton yesterday at the inauguration of the Province of Alberta, Sir Wilfrid Laurier said in part:

"When I look about me on this vast sea of upturned faces I see the determination of the new Province. I see everywhere hope. I see everywhere calm resolution, courage, enthusiasm to face all difficulties, to settle all problems. If it be true everywhere, it must be more true here in this new Province, in this bracing atmosphere of the prairie, that 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast' (Cheers)."

"Gentlemen, in order to bring this new Province to the standard we have set for it, it is necessary that we should have the hearty co-operation of all the people, of all the citizens of Alberta. We must have the co-operation of the old settlers and pioneers, the men of the old Provinces, chiefly of the Province of Ontario, who came here when the land was a desert, and made the desert smile. We must have the co-operation also of the new citizens who have come here from all parts of the world, I may say, to give to Canada, to give to Alberta, the benefit of their individuality, of their energy, of their enterprise."

"And since it happens that I have the honor of occupying the post of the first servant of the Crown in this country, let me say, on behalf of the Crown, with the concurrence of his Excellency the Governor-General, that to these new fellow-countrymen, to these new subjects of the King, I offer the most cordial of all welcomes, cordial to one, cordial to all, a welcome in the first place to those of our own kin who have come from the lands beyond the sea, a welcome also to those who have come from the neighboring kindred republic on the other side." (Cheers).

"Let me say to one and all of our new fellow-countrymen, that the Dominion of Canada is in one respect like the kingdom of Heaven. Those who come at the eleventh hour will receive as fair treatment as those who have been in the fold for a long time.' (Laughter and cheers.) 'What we have we want to share with them, our land, our laws, our civilization. Let them be Britain's subjects, let them take their share of the life of this country, whether it be municipal, provincial or national. Let them be electors as well as citizens. We do not anticipate, and we do not want, that any individuals should forget the land of their origin or their ancestors. Let them look to the past, but let them look also to the future; let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children. Let them become Canadians, British subjects, and give their hearts and souls, their energy, their vows to Canada, to its institutions, to its King, who, like his illustrious mother, is a model constitutional Sovereign.' (Loud cheers.)"

*Reginald Cautley, (Engineer and Surveyor), (Edmonton, 1944):

"Edmonton's first golf course was situated on the hill where our present legislative building stands. It extended to the high knoll immediately west of the high level bridge, encompassed the old fort buildings and ran down the hill slope eastward to the old Indian graveyard. They used factor Hardisty's "Big House" for a club house for some time before it burned down, which happened while the legislative building was under construction."

(Mrs.) Margaret Pardee, (Edmonton, 1944):

"I have some recollections of coming in late from my game of golf to that old club house (the Big House). It had quite an air of earlier days inside, with its dark hand-hewn log-walled rooms, dimly lit by candles thrust in bottle necks."

CHAPTER XVII

¹ Extract from Minutes of Senate Meeting, Oct. 13, 1908, University of Alberta; (College Colors):

"The Committee on College Colors presented their report, which recommended the adoption of Green and Gold as the University colors. The report was adopted on motion of Messrs. Ferris and Nolan and on the suggestion of Mr. Justice Beck, the Secretary was instructed to embody in the minutes the reasons why these particular colors were adopted and their particular adaptability to the Province of Alberta.

"The choice of colors for the University accepted at this meeting—Green and Gold—are peculiarly adapted for the purpose for which they have been accepted. The choice of this beautiful and at the same time infrequent combination was based on an appropriate symbolism . . . the Green representing the wide stretches of verdant prairie land flanked by the deep spruce forests of the province, while the Gold prefigures the golden harvest fields that are Alberta's boast. Referring back to the old accepted symbolism of colors, the choice was still found to have been made with discerning art, for Green there is the symbol of hope, of joyous optimism, and Gold of the shining light of knowledge. Both are certainly particularly applicable to the new University."

² The High Level Bridge here referred to, was completed in 1913 at a total cost of \$2,000,000. This cost was apportioned between the C.P.R., the City of Edmonton, the Provincial Government and the Dominion Government.

It has a height of 157 feet from high water level, length of 2478 feet and width of 43 feet. It required several years to build, and four lives were lost in its construction.—(The Author).

³ Edmonton's street railway began in 1909 with twelve miles of track. That year they carried over two million passengers.—(The Author).

⁴ *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Christmas 1908:

"One of the notable days in Strathcona's history and on that day saw the whole live young city en fete was the first Convocation Day of the University of Alberta. It took place on October 13, 1908. In the temporary quarters of the University in Duggan Street School, a meeting of the University Senate was held before noon, followed by a drive to the beautiful site of the University on the banks of the Saskatchewan, west of Strathcona.

"There were receptions given later by the Governor and by the city. But the big vital function of the day was the Convocation and conferring of degrees at three o'clock in the afternoon in Oddfellow's Hall. Here the public saw for the first time the much-anticipated University as a practical institution. There had been weighty Senate conferences months before this, and the government had debated the question many times before authorizing its establishment, but to none of these had the public been admitted. So it was with pleased surprise that the people who flocked to Convocation found there a group of thirty-three eager intelligent young Albertans composing the first student-body, and, in imposing array, the majority of the 364 graduates, constituting the Convocation. On the platform were the members of the Senate or governing body and everywhere through the hall was carried out most effectively a scheme of decoration in the University colors, green and gold, symbolic of hope and knowledge. Green spruce trees with golden sheaves of wheat and branches of yellowed poplar leaves used in the decorations not only brought out the appropriate colors, but were finely symbolic of the great natural resources of the province, its farm land and its timber.

"The Senate which made such a striking appearance in the hall that day included: Premier Rutherford, whose active interest in the formation of the institution merits for him the title of 'Father of the University'; Hon. Mr. Justice Stuart, Chancellor; President Tory; Hon. Mr. Justice Beck, Vice-Chancellor; J. H. Riddell, D.D.; R. J. Hutchings; P. J. Nolan, K.C.; O. Boyle, M.D.; R. G. Brett, M.D.; J. A. McDougall; J. J. Gaetz; E. K. Strathy; W. S. Galbraith, M.D.; G. A. Kennedy, M.D.; J. McCaig, M.A.; George Harcourt, B.S.A.; and Harold Riley.

"His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Justice Sifton were also seated upon the platform as were the professors of the new University: E. K. Broadus, M.A.; L. H. Alexander, M.A.; W. H. Alexander, M.A.; W. Muir Edwards, M.Sc."

⁵ R. Newton, *Annual Lecture to Freshmen*, October 8, 1943:

"*Quaecumque vera*, the Latin scriptural version of 'Whatsoever things are true'

(Phillipians 4:8), was selected by Dr. W. H. Alexander, first Professor of Classics, in consultation with Dr. H. M. Tory, first President of the University of Alberta, as the *motto* of the University. It was later incorporated by Dr. Alexander and Dr. J. M. MacEachran, first Professor of Philosophy and Provost of the University, in the grace used before meals in Athabasca Hall, one line of which runs 'Quaecumque vera constantius sequamur'."

*Capt. W. R. (Wop) May, O.B.E., D.F.C.:

"The first airplane flight made in Edmonton was at the Exhibition Grounds in the summer of 1910. This was a Curtis biplane flown by pilot Robinson. Later, in the years 1915 and 1916, Miss Kathleen Stinson also made exhibition flights at the Edmonton Fair Grounds.

"On returning from war, my brother (Court) and I formed the 'May Airplane Co. Ltd.' in the spring of 1919. We used the 'City of Edmonton' as a training plane which had been donated by Mr. A. E. Carruthers. Mr. George Gorman and myself were pilots at that time. Col. Geo. W. McLeod accompanied me on the first northern flight over the present Alaska flight highway to Peace River. We stopped at Grande Prairie enroute. Commercial flying between Edmonton and the north may be said to have begun January 1st, 1929, with a mercy flight made to Fort Vermillion to relieve a serious outbreak of dyptheria at that far north post. The mail route to Aklavik was established that year."

*Capt. James A. Bell:

"The present Edmonton Airport, situated on the old Hudson's Bay Reserve was the first municipally owned Class 'A' airport in the Dominion. It was in 1930 that Wiley Post made the first flight over the great international flight highway (i.e. Crossing the bridge into Asia via the Behring Straits) through Edmonton. The Edmonton Airport saw a total arrival of 82,400 aircraft in the year 1943. In one day of September of that year, there were 865 arrivals alone. This included transports and military bombers."

CHAPTER XVIII.

¹ *Edmonton Journal*, February 27, 1943:

"When their plane crashed into the sixty foot trees, it turned on its side. . . . It was almost impossible to locate from the air." (This under report of two men with fractured legs crawling two miles after their cargo plane crashed in Canada's northern bush country.)

² Excerpt from a letter written by His Worship Mayor John W. Fry to His Honor the Mayor of Fairbanks, Dr. H. G. Hughes, dated July 1st, 1943:

"Fairbanks and Edmonton are next door neighbors. An airplane passenger can leave Edmonton's modern airport in the morning and be in Fairbanks in time for evening dinner."

³ The tree here referred to is the maple standing immediately south of the Edmonton Club building on Macdonald Drive.—(The Author).

⁴ The Lauder house here referred to stands in its original site on 100A Ave. (formerly Howard Ave.), just north of Jasper Avenue. The first baker of Edmonton lived here.—(The Author).

⁵ This sign hung on the outside walls of the Edmonton Civic Block for nearly a year. It was put up October 16th, 1942, at the time of Canada's second Victory Loan drive.—(The Author).

⁶ Edmonton's winter of 1942-43 was of exceptional severity.—(The Author).

⁷ The tree here referred to grows on the east side of the legislative building. It is the remaining one of a row of maples that was planted on the north boundary of Factor Hardisty's garden in front of his "Big House" (1875).—(The Author).

⁸ These vehicles, United States Government construction equipment for the Alaska Highway, were parked on the brow of the north bluff of the Saskatchewan river in Edmonton during the winter of 1942-43.—(The Author).

⁹ The huge spreading maple tree in the rear of the residence of Colonel Hastings Newburn, corner of 111th Street and 90th Avenue, is the tree Lawrence Garneau planted in front of his log house in the 80's.—(The Author).

¹⁰ A. H. Sandwell, *Planes Over Canada*; Thomas Nelson & Sons Limited:

"Leigh Brintnell is another notable North country flier, who has made the Mackenzie River district his particular stamping-ground . . . in 1927 joined Western Canada Airways, becoming Assistant General Manager of Canadian Airways Limited, into which that company was absorbed. It was while so employed that he flew Gilbert Labine to Great Bear Lake, where the French-Canadian prospector found radium-bearing *pitchblende*, and where extensive mining is now being done."

RUTH AP 30 '77		
DUE RUTH SEP 15 '77	R.	
SEP 21 RETURN		
DUE RUTH JUL 23 '81		
JUL 15 RETURN		
RUTH DE 31 '93		
DUE RUTH APR 29 '94		
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